

The power of love

On May 1, 2023, a plane carrying seven passengers disappeared off radar in southern Colombia. On board were 4 children with their mother, a relative and the pilot. Two weeks later, on May 16, a search team found the plane in a thick patch of the Amazon rainforest and recovered the bodies of the three adults. This suggested that the children had escaped the wreckage and wandered into the jungle to find help. More than 100 soldiers accompanied by sniffer dogs and dozens of volunteers from Indigenous tribes launched the « Operation Esperance », a massive search in this large area of wild vegetation. Hopes of finding the children alive were strengthened by the discovery, a few days later, of a makeshift shelter with a few personal effects, a feeding bottle and some partly eaten fruits. Rescuers used helicopters to drop boxes of food into the jungle, and to broadcast a message recorded by the children grandmother telling them to stay in one place and to trust the soldiers looking for them. On June 9, after 40 days by themselves in the jungle, Lesly (13 years), Soleiny (9 years), Tien Noriel (5 years) and Cristin (1 year) were found 5 km from the wreckage of the plane. They were weak and partially dehydrated. Apart from a few insect bites, they had not suffered any attack or injury. They were rapidly flown back to Bogotá, where they were reunited with their loved ones and could benefit from a progressive malnutrition program.

This story caught the attention of our editorial board. It bears witness to children's capacity for resistance, resilience and adaptability. As paediatricians, we regularly meet sick children who, at their level, demonstrate heroic courage and determination. In the face of what some are already describing as a miracle, we can wonder how these children from 1 to 13 year-old were able to survive in such a hostile environment. Friends and family insist that the children, members of an Indigenous tribe, had a deep knowledge and a particular connection to the jungle and its natural resources. After eating the flour and food carried on the plane, the youngsters fed on the fruits and roots of edible plants they could find in the jungle. They stayed close to a small stream to keep access to drinking water. Lesly, the eldest sister, showed leadership and an impressive sense of responsibility. She was an enormous moral support to her siblings as the two youngest children celebrated their 1st and 5th birthdays in the jungle. The rescuers also underline the importance of the will to live that they felt with the children. This feeling sustained them throughout the long weeks of the search. Antonio Sera, a Brazilian who also survived 36 days in the Amazon rainforest after his plane crashed in 2021, confirms that he has kept his confidence in life through the love of others, by knowing that he was expected and supported by his family and relatives. This was well understood by the children's mother. Before she died, she told them: « *You guys are going to see the kind of man your dad is, and he is going to show you the same kind of great love that I have shown you...* ». These testimonials certainly have a special resonance for us, Belgian citizens, who witnessed the unfailing mobilization of a family and a community to support and help one of their own to get back in Belgium. The images of Oliver Vandecasteele and his family at their reunion at the Melsbroek airport on May 26, 2023 were such illustration of the power of love !

To invite you to enjoy the summer in a calm and peaceful environment, we are delighted to present the summer issue of the Begian Journal of Paediatrics. We publish a research article on medication discontinuation in children with epilepsy by E. Corthout and colleagues and the results of a survey made by L. Desmet and his team on first aid knowledge in Flemish youth movements. We also develop two review articles on traumatic pancreatic injury by P. Van der Speeten and colleagues and on the management of Helicobacter pylori infection in children by L. Toch and colleagues. Several informative clinical history are reported: recurrent oral aphthosis as presentation of Crohn disease, Aicardi Syndrome, Luc's abscess complicating otitis media, Cushing disease after topical application of corticosteroids, Behcet disease, side effect of risperdone, pneumoparotid and early recognition and treatment of atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome.

The made in Belgium section presents the thesis of R. Mbusa Kambale from UCLouvain about feeding practices and probiotic effects on nutritional recovery and morbidity in severely malnourished infants in Democratic Republic of Congo.

We hope this new issue and these happy-ending stories will inspire you this summer. As it was the case for us, they may help you to think on what is necessary for your life and what contributes to your fulfillment.

Christophe Chantrain and Marc Raes

Uw vragen of commentaar
Vos questions ou commentaires



BELGISCHE VERENIGING
VOOR KINDERGENEESKUNDE
SOCIÉTÉ BELGE DE PÉDIATRIE

Comité de rédaction - Redactieraad
M. Raes - C. Chantrain

Gasthuisberg - Kindergeneeskunde

Herestraat 49 - 3000 Leuven

E-mail BJ-Ped@hotmail.com