



Emily. Frightened, she finally went to see a doctor at Queenstown polyclinic after ignoring the lump for two months.

After a thorough examination, the doctor prescribed antibiotics for her condition. Emily left the polyclinic with no inkling that her condition was actually serious. She took the antibiotics faithfully every day. After a week, her arm felt lighter even when she was lifting flowerpots in her friend's florist shop. She was elated and her fears subsided. Relief engulfed her as she thought she was on her way to recovery.

In fact, Emily's nightmare was just beginning. The lump seemed to have a mind of its own and continued to grow. At the end of the fourth month, the lump was already three centimetres. To make matters worse, yellowish and sticky pus was dripping

large B-Cell non hodgkin's lymphoma, a blood-related cancer. She was referred to an oncologist at the National University Hospital of Singapore (NUH). The oncologist told her gently that she needed six sessions of chemotherapy to eradicate the cancer cells and prevent them from spreading to the other parts of her body. When Emily heard that the estimated cost of one session of chemotherapy was approximately \$4500 before subsidy, she was devastated. There was no way she could afford the hefty cost of the chemotherapy. She was single and was living with both her aged parents.

### Hope finally arrives

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. In Emily's case, hope came when she was introduced to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation by a social worker at NUH. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation assisted Emily fully for the six sessions of R-CHOP chemotherapy. The cost came up to \$8000 after Medisave claim.

Emily has undergone four sessions of chemotherapy when I interviewed her in June. She was optimistic and chirpy about her condition. In fact, she was a breeze to talk to and appeared to be recovering well as she looked good.

Emily's only lament was that she may have spared herself the anxiousness with her illness if she had gone to see the doctor earlier. Emily really regretted not heeding her colleague's advice to see a doctor immediately back then. However, her ordeal has also made her realise her blessings. Compared to other cancer patients, her side effects after the chemotherapy sessions were considered mild. Other than mild diarrhoea and fatigue, she did not suffer other severe side effects such as drastic hair loss or vomiting, typical for chemotherapy. She expressed her gratitude to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation for their financial assistance.

"Please see a doctor if you have a lump. It may stop the lump from becoming malignant. You'll never know," is the wise advice of Emily to all of us. ♥

*Leukemia & Lymphoma Foundation is a registered charity and Institute of Public Character in Singapore. It subsidises needy residents affected by blood cancers. For enquiries on financial assistance on leukemia & lymphoma, please contact the Leukemia & Lymphoma Foundation at 6778 7545/6397 2394 or visit [www.llf.org.sg](http://www.llf.org.sg).*



*Emily Wee is still undergoing chemotherapy for lymphoma. She remains cheerful and optimistic despite her condition.*

# A lymphoma patient's healing journey

There's more to a seemingly harmless lump *By Christina Tay*

**a** lump changed florist Emily Wee's life completely. In Christmas 2006, Emily aged 57, was overwhelmed with endless orders during that festive season. She was mildly surprised when her arm felt heavy as she lifted the gigantic bunches of tulips from the pail. Pressing around her arm area, Emily could feel a small lump, about one centimetre, in her armpit. Since there was no pain, she ignored the soreness and dived back into her hectic schedule.

During lunch, Emily mentioned the small lump to her colleague casually. Concerned, her colleague advised her to see a doctor right away. Emily ignored her colleague's advice to consult the doctor as she was not feeling ill. She also thought the lump will go away on its own eventually. However, the lump did not subside.

### The lump grew bigger

The lump grew bigger within the next two months, much to the chagrin of

non-stop from the bumpy lump the whole day. Emily had to run to the toilet to clean and dry herself at the armpit area several times a day. The first bouts of sickness also started to set in. She felt exhausted and unwell but still managed to continue working as a florist. Sensing something was amiss, she went back to the polyclinic. This time, the doctor told Emily she had to be referred to Alexandra Hospital and promptly made the earliest appointment that was two weeks later.

During the two weeks, Emily felt uneasy and anxious about her condition. On the day of her appointment, the doctor at Alexandra Hospital told her she needed to remove the lump right away. Emily was wheeled into the operation theatre the next day to remove the lump.

Emily's woes did not stop there. Much to her distress, the biopsy showed that the growth was malignant. Emily's world came crushing down when she was diagnosed with stage one of diffuse