

The journey home

Maria Eugenia (in the picture) is a young mother. Her son, Yandri was seven years old when he died and his two sisters are three and four. Yandri had cancer and his mum and dad did all they could to get treatment for him, they moved to Quito for surgery and chemotherapy but the cancer spread, his abdomen filled up with tumour and his liver began to fail. He is the youngest patient we have looked after.



They stayed in Quito, this very humble family from the coast and then the dad left to find a job to pay the rent because they were about to be evicted.

Now Maria Eugenia was alone with her three children without money and without any education (she had never been to school). Yandri aged seven was the only one who could read, he was such a bright little boy and was able to make some of his wishes very clear: he never wanted to go back to hospital or receive another injection again and he wanted to see his dad. His dad wanted to see him desperately but his job was an 8 hour bus journey away.

We visited and phoned, provided medicines, controlled Yandri's pain, gave toys and read stories because their mum couldn't. We tried to be a friend to all the family, they were so isolated. All the team who visited (Amanda our nurse, Friné our psychologist and I) are mums of young children, we cried.

At long last after an insistent phone call his dad arrived but now Yandri was very weak. They wanted to take a ten hour journey on four busses, we didn't think he could manage it but they still wanted to go. There seemed to be no option so we hired a taxi for them and they went and Yandri died on the way.

And it is so sad, could we have done better for Yandri?

I only remember that his dad said when he phoned after our visits that he seemed a different little boy, happier.

Nicky Bailhache.