

## **Survival and Outcome of Extremely Premature Infants**

It was estimated that in Hong Kong about 0.5% of live births were born with birth weights less than 1 kg while the average birth weight is about 3.5 kg. Because of the immature organ development and the extreme small size, all these babies require prolonged neonatal intensive care support to sustain live and may suffer short and long term organ dysfunction like respiratory distress syndrome, intraventricular haemorrhage, patent ductus arteriosus and retinopathy of prematurity.

Among 124 infants whose birth weights were less than 1 kg and who were born in Queen Mary Hospital and Tsan Yuk Hospital between 1997 and 2002 (among them two-third were born prematurely before 28 weeks gestation, 5 were even born before 24 weeks), the overall survival rate upon discharge was 85%. However, these babies usually suffer from tremendous physical and psychological stress due to the unnatural treatments, and the pain and stress experienced by their parents cannot be expressed by words. Besides, prolonged hospital stay of the babies incurs enormous medical and human resources as well as costs.

Life is invaluable but parents need to understand the overall implication and the possible long-term morbidities so as to have a well informed and realistic expectation. A realistic and balance expectation can enable the parent to participate in the decision making on the treatment goal for the best interest of their babies when major complication arises.