

Maan

Category: House Calls and Home Care
written by Laura Fry | December 15, 2025

Maan was born on my daughter's sixth birthday, after an uncomplicated pregnancy. Husband, both grandmothers (sisters to each other), all from Southern India, were present and supportive. The birth was greeted with great joy, but within an hour, that joy was marred by a sudden seizure. I called in my pediatric colleagues, and we transferred the infant to the tertiary care center an hour up the road.

After months of evaluation and care, it was found that Maan had a mitochondrial defect, no hope for a meaningful life and was sent home with feeding tubes, a trach and good nursing care. Although her medical management was done mostly by consultants, I was their family doc and the anchor in our town. I had seen her once at the referral hospital, and now started seeing her and her family at home.

At one of these visits, her parents asked me if I could pierce her ears, a ceremony important in their culture. This was usually performed around the first birthday, but Maan's circumstances required an earlier date. She had missed many important milestones—naming, first rice—so this was very meaningful to them. I had to guilt my staff into letting me have a kit for this purpose, usually kept tightly under lock and key.

The ceremony that Saturday was just lovely! Maan was beautiful in a yellow dress, very lacy and elaborate, and I was introduced to various friends and family members. When it was time for the ceremony, Rishi held his daughter, whom everybody had been admiring and making a fuss over. I performed the piercing as they directed me, very easily. Maan wiggled a little but never cried. The guests all admired her, said how beautiful she was with her sparkly new earrings, and they took pictures for family back home. I left the apartment with a sense of having done the right and kind things for this family, giving them a moment of joy and celebration with their precious daughter.

A few months later, in the wee hours of Thanksgiving morning, the parents called to tell me that Maan had died. I rushed over and sat with them as they made calls, recalled memories and waited for the world to wake up. We have stayed close over the years, and they gave an Indian Barbie doll to my daughter. She named her Maan, and when she was ready to give her other dolls away, she hung on to this one.

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