



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HELEN DEVOS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL:

Anne Veltema, Public Relations Coordinator, (616) 391-7920

anne.veltema@devoschildrens.org

MARY FREE BED REHABILITATION HOSPITAL:

Meg Derrer, Marketing Director, (616) 242-0474, meg.derrer@maryfreebed.com

Christine Hoek, Public Relations, (616) 662-9241, christine@articulate-pr.com

New Program Offers Treatment to Help Kids Walk Easier

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. — Six-year-old Aaron Van Kampen of Sparta is one of the first patients to benefit from a new collaborative between Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital and Helen DeVos Children's Hospital. The Advanced Management of Pediatric Spasticity program (AMPS) offers children who suffer from spasticity six treatment options. It includes selective dorsal rhizotomy (SDR), a neurosurgical operation never before available in West Michigan. Spasticity is a condition that affects a child's muscles and makes walking difficult.

"Many children with cerebral palsy or brain injury have spasticity that affects their ability to walk," said Andrea Kuldaneck, M.D., medical director of the pediatric and adolescent program at Mary Free Bed. "At times there is a need for input from multiple experts to develop the best plan to address problems affecting walking. The program provides ready access to a team of specialists who can address all aspects of the complex problems affecting children with spasticity. The comprehensive nature of the AMPS program is key to success, resulting in better patient outcomes."

AMPS is a multifaceted, integrated program which provides several treatment options including oral medication, physical and occupational therapy, Botox[®] injections, Intrathecal Baclofin Pump and SDR. Specialists in the AMPS program include neurodevelopmental pediatricians, neurologists, neurosurgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, physical medicine and rehabilitation experts, orthotic clinicians and physical therapists.

"Aaron was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at seven months," said Heather Van Kampen, Aaron's mom. "We tried a variety of treatments including oral baclofin and Botox[®]. The Botox[®] worked well but eventually wore off. Selective dorsal rhizotomy was Aaron's best hope for long-term improvement."

Selective dorsal rhizotomy can permanently reduce leg muscle stiffness. During the surgical procedure, performed by neurosurgeon Stanley Skarli, M.D., of Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, sensory nerve roots that carry messages from leg muscles to the spinal cord are exposed and tested with special monitoring equipment. Dr. Skarli selectively cuts the nerve roots that are not functioning properly to reduce spastic muscle movement. "Selective dorsal rhizotomy is best performed on children between the ages of four and six," said Dr. Skarli. "Intense physical therapy is needed following surgery. Children must be highly motivated and driven to re-train their body."

SDR has made an impact on the entire Van Kampen family.

“Aaron is a different boy now,” added Heather Van Kampen. “He has a long road of therapy ahead but is making remarkable progress. From improved balance to increased use of his right hand, we are seeing dramatic changes in his movement. Before surgery it was a struggle for him to sit Indian style and now he can almost put his legs around his neck. He’s even chasing his twin sister around the house.”

SDR is supported by the Motion Analysis Center at Mary Free Bed, which uses state-of-the-art technology to objectively measure complex joint movements, muscle activity patterns and the forces acting on the body during walking. Patients undergo a gait, or movement analysis, prior to surgery and then once therapy goals are met, they undergo a second analysis as a follow-up measurement of results.

“The AMPS program expedites care for patients by coordinating treatment, simplifying referrals and sharing documentation between the two hospitals,” added Dr. Kuldaneck. “Children and their families now have access to the best from both hospitals when it comes to spasticity treatment.”

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About Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital

Founded more than 100 years ago, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital is an 80-bed, not-for-profit, acute rehabilitation center. Its mission is to restore hope and freedom through rehabilitation to people with disabilities. Mary Free Bed offers comprehensive inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation for children and adults using an interdisciplinary approach. Also available are numerous specialty programs designed to increase the quality of life and independence of people with disabilities. For more information about Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, please visit www.maryfreebed.com or call (800) 528-8989.

About Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital is West Michigan's largest children's hospital, serving children and families throughout a 37-county region. A teaching hospital, it includes more than 150 pediatric specialty physicians uniquely skilled in providing medical and surgical care to children in 40 pediatric specialties. The hospital cares for more than 7,500 inpatients and 150,000 outpatients annually. Helen DeVos Children's Hospital is committed to caring for children and their families with compassion, excellence and innovation. Visit www.devoschildrens.org for more information.