

Children's Health

Safeguarding A Child's Health: Trusting Intuition

(NAPSA)—A mother's intuition can be a valuable asset when it comes to the well-being of a child.

One person who would agree is Michael Murray, 15, of New York, whose life was probably saved by his mother's persistence when she just knew that something was wrong.

Michael was born with a variety of features that seemed abnormal to his mother, Karen. He had a dislocated hip and contracted fingers (bent backwards).

He was a "floppy" baby who had loose joints. As he grew, he was taller than his peers, with an indented chest bone and disproportionately long arms and legs. An array of doctors told Karen that Michael was perfectly fine. But she was not convinced.

On Michael's fifth birthday, Karen went online and plugged in his symptoms. Out came a diagnosis: Marfan syndrome.

Karen's fears were confirmed the next day by doctors who agreed that Michael did, in fact, have Marfan syndrome.

Marfan syndrome is a connective tissue disorder that affects the eyes, bones, joints, lungs and blood vessels. It is the effect on the aorta, the large blood vessel near the heart, that poses the greatest danger; without proper monitoring, medication and surgery, the aorta will enlarge and could tear or rupture, leading to death.

Because of his mother's determination, Michael was diagnosed and got the treatment he needed. Although he has been encouraged to play basketball because of his height, this accomplished gui-



Photo by Rick Guidotti

Parents must follow their intuition and be an advocate for their child's health, especially in the case of Marfan syndrome.

tarist is only involved in activities that do not endanger his joints, eyes and aorta.

Karen, who serves on the Board of Directors of the National Marfan Foundation (www.marfan.org), has found information and support nationwide. She has networked with other parents, who also had to visit an array of doctors.

"This is one case when getting the diagnosis is crucial," said Karen. "If you know you have Marfan syndrome and get treated, you have the opportunity for a long life. If not, you are at an extreme risk of dying a sudden, early death from a ruptured aorta.

"If your child exhibits the signs of Marfan syndrome, do not delay. Visit your pediatrician to start the evaluation. An orthopedist, cardiologist and ophthalmologist will also need to conduct an exam to confirm the diagnosis. It can be the difference between life and death."