

Good News Department

Twins Treated For Bowed Legs At Shriners Hospital

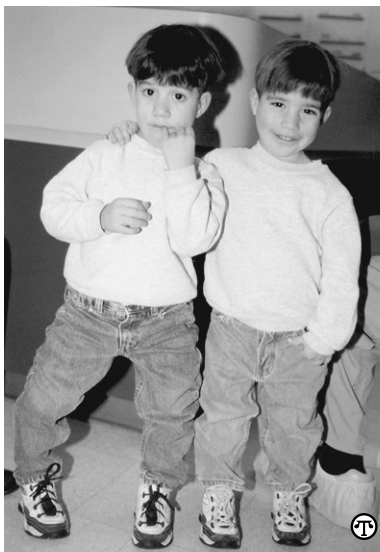
(NAPSA)—In many ways, the Palmer twins are just like other four year olds—running, playing, singing silly songs and watching cartoons. But Nick and Eric have a condition known as X-linked hypophosphatemia (XLH), an inherited skeletal disorder that causes a softness of the bones that is sometimes called vitamin D-resistant rickets.

For Nick, the condition means severely bowed legs. Eric's legs are also bowed, although much less. If inadequately treated in childhood, a middle-aged XLH sufferer often experiences painful cracks in bones, osteoarthritis reflecting premature wear in the knees and hips and calcification in the membranes around the joints and between bones.

Since last summer, the brothers have been receiving treatment at Shriners Hospitals for Children in St. Louis. Michael Whyte, M.D., medical-scientific director of the center, said this Shriners Hospital cares for the world's largest population of patients with XLH.

"This disease occurs about once in 20,000 live births. It's genetically transmitted due to a defect carried on the X (female) chromosome," Whyte explained.

"There was a time when perhaps 50 to 75 percent of children with this disease would have to undergo an osteotomy—a surgery that involves cutting and straightening the bone," said Perry L. Schoenecker, M.D., St. Louis Shriners Hospital chief of staff.



Four-year-old twins Nick (left) and Eric Palmer are being treated for X-linked hypophosphatemia.

"But by using a drug regimen pioneered at the Canadian Shriners Hospital in Montreal, we have been able to control XLH in these children without surgery in many cases."

When Nick's bowing was first noticed at 18 months, doctors told Toni Palmer that her son would likely outgrow the condition. Over time, however, the bowing continued to worsen and a Shriners physician recommended that the family consult with Whyte. After six months of drug therapy using an active form of vitamin D and an inorganic phosphate supplementation treatment, there was a glimmer of hope.

Toni Palmer said she can identify with her sons' experience with XLH. At age 5, she spent six months in a body cast after having her legs surgically broken to treat her bowed bones.

Nick falls down when he runs with his brother. "The best case scenario is that Nick's legs will straighten up with his treatment here at Shriners, and he'll grow up to be a nice, tall man," the boys' mother explained. "They take great care of the kids. I'm so glad that they're here for treatment. I know this is the best place for them."

Whyte is hopeful that Nick's condition will continue to improve, and he anticipates that surgery will not be necessary. Once the bones are straight and have stopped growing, Whyte explained, it seems that the drug therapy can be stopped with little fear of deformity returning.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide free treatment to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa FL 33607, or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada. Shriners Hospitals provide free treatment to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.