

# UpClose

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## CST EASES TODDLER'S SPASTICITY AFTER NEAR DROWNING

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It happened as quickly as reports state. Within minutes of sneaking outdoors, 2-year-old Matty Fitzsimons was facing death, nearly drowned in a pool of water no deeper than what an average bathtub holds. That was Memorial Day 1999.

Doctors and psychologists said he would be "severely spastic and a vegetable the rest of his life." A social worker told Matty's parents, Paula and Jim Fitzsimons, "God's not going to do anything for you. You should be home with your other kids"—four girls and two boys ranging in age from 2 to 12 years. Still, the Fitzsimons family refused to give up on Matty.

For two months Paula and Jim held vigil at the hospital while doctors tried to determine the source of Matty's spasms. "His body was completely arched backward," says Paula. "His head was turned to the right and locked. His teeth were clenched, his arms pulled back, his feet turned out in a ballerina position, and he screamed the whole time. The spasticity was so severe that he kept blowing out his IVs."

After a semipermanent IV line and feeding tube were inserted, Matty calmed down for a while. "But only because they had him on morphine, Valium, Haldol, clonidine and another three pages of drugs for other things," says Paula. Eventually, surgeons inserted a pump into Matty's abdomen to dispense the powerful antispastic drug baclofen into his spine. It wasn't a solution, but it brought some relief.



*Matty Fitzsimons enjoys a hug from brother Nick (right) and a cousin (left) after blowing out the candles at his 3rd-birthday party.*

The first real ray of hope for the Fitzsimonses came during a visit by one of the hospital's occupational therapists. While trying to work on Matty's unbending body she said, "I've been taking some courses in CranioSacral Therapy. Do you mind if I try some of this?" Barely touching Matty, she placed one hand on his spine and the other on his stomach. "The spasticity started to break a little bit and he stopped crying," says Paula. "She was the first person to get Matty to settle down without using medication." Paula got on the phone to Dr. John Upledger, who helped her find

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# HEALTHCARE: A STATE OF SELF-DEFENSE

I have a friend who was in a car accident not long ago. Kay\* was cruising down the road at 45 mph when another car suddenly crossed her path. The force of the impact caused the air bag to explode, lacerating Kay's face, and sent her knees slamming into the dashboard.



At the emergency room, the doctors took x-rays, found no broken bones, and promptly sent her home with a prescription for painkillers and advice on how to wash her wounded face.

Fortunately, Kay is married to a CranioSacral Therapist who understood the full effect of such a serious impact to the soft tissues. He immediately began icing his wife's knees by the hour to help bring down the swelling. He gave her warm Epsom salt baths to decrease systemic muscle soreness. And he used his hands to gently release the tissues that had recoiled from such a strong blow.

By addressing the soft-tissue injuries as soon as possible, his chances of helping his wife avoid long-term debilitating pain multiplied exponentially. Still, they were both sure they'd get even more advice when they visited their family doctor two days later.

Indeed, the doctor gave Kay one more prescription for inflammation—but that was

about it. Surprisingly there was no mention of the most obvious and least expensive courses of treatment. Ice. Hot baths. Massage therapy. CranioSacral Therapy. Instead, Kay was given one more drug and told to wait it out. If the pain didn't subside, she was told, an MRI might be next. After that, who knew?

## Armed With Information

Thankfully, Kay had armed herself with a full spectrum of healthcare information. Rather than remain passive she chose to seek out other options she knew were available to her. She received Neuromuscular Therapy to release the muscles that had convulsed in an effort to protect her joints and bones. She received Myofascial Therapy to relieve the trauma to the tissues that ran like a web throughout her body. And she received more CranioSacral Therapy to alleviate any pressure on her brain and spinal cord, and help ensure that her central nervous system was free to facilitate a full recovery.

Yet none of that might have happened if Kay had taken her doctor's advice at face value. Unfortunately, it seems that healthcare these days has become a matter of self-defense. We have moved so far away from the wise family physician who cared for us from the time we were babies, approaching each malady with concern and common sense. Instead, the medical industry appears to be sliced up into small slivers, with each professional tending to focus on his or her own small segment.

The ER doctors in this case were there to see that no bones were broken. The primary care physician was there to dispense the drugs. And thank goodness Kay's family was there to help her address the problem from the point of whole-body wellness. Now, after a series of simple, inexpensive measures, Kay is well on her way to a full recovery. I dare say, if she had taken the advice of only her doctors, she might still be in bed.

## Take Control of Your Care

All this is to say that no one will ever tend to your health the way you can. More than ever it remains up to you to know what your choices are and demand them. Yes, there are good doctors out there who do whatever they can to take care of their patients. (And believe me, insurance companies aren't making it easy for them.) But that shouldn't stop you from educating yourself about all your choices. The bottom line is, no one can ever be as responsible for you as you must be for yourself.

So please stay in touch with us here at UI HealthPlex. We will continue to inform you of the successes we experience so you can add that to your understanding of whole-body health and wellness.

\*Name was changed to protect patient confidentiality.

## YOU ASKED

### Q. How are intensive therapy programs different from regular sessions?

A. These one- and two-week outpatient programs are designed mainly for patients who could use a period of focused attention to accelerate their healing processes. Often they've simply reached a plateau in their regular healthcare routine and need that extra "push" to get back on track.

Each intensive therapy program features a select team of clinicians comprised of UI HealthPlex staff and skilled visiting therapists. They work with patients in both one-on-one

and multiple-therapist sessions to address the specific health concerns of each individual. The programs are usually limited to six participants whose challenges are addressed individually and through group sessions.

CranioSacral Therapy is the mainstay of these programs. Once the source of a patient's problem is isolated, we often combine CST with other therapies to facilitate the most effective results. These therapies might include SomatoEmotional Release, Therapeutic Imagery & Dialogue, Visceral Manipulation, Mechanical Link, Lymph Drainage Therapy, acupuncture and cupressure, counseling services and massage therapy.

While the programs generally mix patient groups, they often address challenging

healthcare concerns, such as brain and spinal cord dysfunction, learning disabilities, autism and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thank you for your inquiry,  
Sheryl McGavin, MBA, OTR/L  
Co-Director, Intensive Programs

You Asked is a new featured column of UpClose making its debut in this issue. Questions are answered by UI staff therapists and appear on a space-available basis. If you have a question you would like considered for this column, please submit it to UpClose Newsletter Editor, The Upledger Institute, 11211 Prosperity Farms Rd, D325, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410-3487, or by e-mail to [debbie@upledger.com](mailto:debbie@upledger.com).

# INTENSIVE THERAPY PROGRAMS



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or to make an appointment:  
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One- and two-week programs address such conditions as:

- Traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries
- Autism
- Learning disabilities
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Migraine headaches
- Chronic neck and back pain
- Emotional difficulties
- Stress and tension-related problems
- Central nervous system disorders
- And numerous other healthcare concerns, including
  - Motor-coordination impairments
  - TMJ
  - Orthopedic problems
  - Chronic fatigue
  - Scoliosis
  - Neurovascular or immune disorders
  - Infantile disorders
  - Colic
  - Post-surgical dysfunction
  - Fibromyalgia
  - and other connective-tissue disorders

## SHARECARE® WORKSHOPS

This one-day workshop explains **CranioSacral Therapy in everyday terms and teaches a few simple techniques you can use to help yourself or family members.**

Aug. 18, 2001 – Chambersburg, Penn.

Aug. 18, 2001 – Ossining, N.Y.

Oct. 6, 2001 – Leominster, Mass.

Oct. 6, 2001 – Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Oct. 7, 2001 – Williamsport, Penn.

Oct. 20, 2001 – St. Louis, Mo.

Nov. 3, 2001 – Minneapolis, Minn.

## CST EASES TODDLER'S SPASTICITY

*Continued from cover*

CranioSacral Therapist Mable Sharp, PT, in their area.

In August 1999 Matty was released from the hospital, and the CranioSacral Therapy (CST) sessions with Mable began. One of the first areas focused on was Matty's skull. Two days after the accident, Paula had found a large lump on the back of his head. "The doctor came and looked at it, but informed me that it was part of Matty's skull and that it had always been there." Paula knew otherwise. As a mother, she not only knew every nuance of her child's head, but having a degree in health education she knew pathophysiology, which told her that the lump was in the area of his brain that controls motor activity. Sure enough, with CranioSacral Therapy, the bump started going away—and with it the spasticity.

Matty continued to progress through the coming months. Then, in November, he suddenly turned into a "big spaghetti noodle," as Paula describes him. Though weaned off the IV drugs, Matty was still receiving 245 mcg per day of baclofen—

145 mcg more than the normal maximum dosage. His neurosurgeon's response: "What's the problem? He's not spastic." In other words: better to be limp than spastic.

The Fitzsimonses quickly sought help from another source, and by Christmas Matty was completely off baclofen. Through subsequent rehabilitation, Matty had the chance to work with several therapists who were performing CST. "I don't know what we would have done or where Matty would be without the CranioSacral," says Paula. "CST works with getting him reconnected."

Even Jim, the skeptic in the family, has come to see and appreciate the effects of CranioSacral Therapy in his son's life. After Matty participated recently in a "CST for Pediatrics" class, Jim commented to Paula, "Is it my imagination, or is Matty reaching better and fine-tuning his coordination with his eyes and hands?" Up until then, he had maintained an "I'm not sure it wouldn't have happened

anyway" attitude about CST. "Now it was obvious that CranioSacral had made a difference," says Paula. In particular, Matty had severe strabismus which "seemed to get better the more CranioSacral Therapy he had."

Matty, who turned 4 on June 23rd, is now learning to use a walker. "He has really started to exert his independence," says Paula. "His speech is becoming more spontaneous, and so many things are coming back to him—including how to play many of his favorite games from before."

And just think, all this progress from a boy who was supposed to be severely spastic and a vegetable for the rest of his life. Paula is quick to encourage parents, "Don't believe them if they tell you that right off the bat. Educate

yourselves. And try CranioSacral Therapy, especially if you're dealing with a head injury. We intend to make sure everyone knows how important finding the right therapy is."



*Matty catches a ride on Dad's shoulders during a recent family hike.*

# FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER AN OFF-THE-SCALE SUCCESS

By the time the auctioneer's gavel came down for the final time the evening of April 26<sup>th</sup>—marking the end of The Upledger Foundation's first silent auction and wine tasting—the excitement felt by those in the room couldn't be contained. Two therapists had just bid \$5,000 each for the privilege of lunch and a private session with Dr. John Upledger.

"We never could have predicted the level of enthusiasm this event would generate," says John Matthew Upledger, CEO of The Upledger Institute. "We're honored by the tremendous show of support for the work of the Foundation." Among the research and patient programs that will benefit are Compassionate Touch for children, BioAquatic Explorations, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for Vietnam Veterans.

In addition to the live auction of Dr. Upledger, the evening included a wine



*A Beyond the Dura participant examines a limited-edition Fitz and Floyd sugar bowl and creamer set during the silent auction. Beside it is an autographed Miami Dolphins football helmet.*

tasting and silent auction of some 65 donated items—resort weekends, autographed sports memorabilia, fine wines, health and beauty baskets, artwork, and many therapy-oriented products.

While the event was open to anyone who wanted to attend, the majority of the more than 200 who participated were therapists in town for UF's Beyond the Dura research conference held at The Jupiter Beach Resort in Jupiter, Florida.

"It was so much fun that we're most likely going to make it an annual event with a more extensive live auction," says John Matthew. "It will probably be held in April to coincide with the annual CranioSacral Therapy Awareness Month, and also Beyond the Dura, which we hold every two years."

Watch for details in future editions of *UpClose* and on The Upledger Institute's website at [www.upledger.com](http://www.upledger.com).



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