

Health Bulletin



Titanium Rib Implant A Success At Shriners Hospital

(NAPSA)—Doctors discovered that 3-year-old Matthew Harper's spine was curved when he was only 4 months old. He was diagnosed with progressive scoliosis. His mother also had scoliosis. She only had a slight curve and never needed treatment.

A brace was made for Matthew to wear under his clothes with the intention of keeping the curve from progressing. When bracing did not work anymore and his curve was progressing to 85 degrees, Randal Betz, M.D., chief of staff at Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia, spoke to his family about a new procedure that might benefit Matthew.

Shriners Hospital is one of seven sites in the United States that is participating in a study entitled VEPTR, Vertical Expandable Prosthetic Titanium Rib, better known as titanium rib. The study is under Federal Drug Administration approval.

Matthew is the first Philadelphia Shriners Hospital patient to undergo this procedure. His curve had been interfering with his breathing and he has thoracic insufficiency syndrome, which is the inability of the thorax to support normal respiration or lung growth.

Betz performed a successful surgery on Matthew and he is now wearing a brace to protect the hardware and recent incision. During surgery, the titanium rib was attached on the posterior chest to an upper rib at one end and to a lower rib or lumbar spine at the other end. "This will help expand the rib cage and help straighten Matthew's spine," explained Betz. "It will also allow his chest cavity to grow as he grows. We will go back every four to six months and expand it, so that it grows as Matthew grows."

Matthew will continue to have less invasive procedures during his



The successful titanium rib surgery helped expand Matthew's rib cage and straighten his spine.

growing period until about age 13 or 14. Matthew has been back to the hospital for follow-up visits and his father said, "So far things seem to be going well with Matthew."

He is currently enjoying preschool, another milestone he has conquered.

Since Matthew's operation, surgeons at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital have performed additional titanium rib surgeries on children, all of whom are making excellent progress.

For more information on Shriners network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge 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. Treatment is provided to children under age 18 regardless to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.