

steps

Baby Hip Health Week 24 February to 1 March 2008



Rowana's story...

“One little girl’s experience help to change hospital policy on ultrasound”

In the summer of 2006, our daughter Rowana was diagnosed with Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip (DDH). At 15 months this was a fairly late diagnosis, which we soon discovered is quite a common occurrence.

We also discovered that there were several factors surrounding her birth that put her at quite a high risk of developing DDH. Let me tell you our story, starting with the pregnancy:

At 34 weeks my waters broke, and as Rowana was breech I waited in Hospital for 3 weeks before she was born by Caesarean Section at almost 37 weeks. She had her hip test but was given a negative result. Soon after she was born I noticed that she has what I now know to be ‘asymmetrical creases’, but I do not remember whether I mentioned it to any medical professionals and didn’t pursue the matter.

Her 6-week hip test also proved negative, and at her 6-9 months review her hip was not checked. Everything seemed fine until she started to walk holding onto furniture at around 9 months. We noticed that she either held her left leg bent or her right leg on tiptoe. A

Physiotherapist friend found she had reduced movement in her right hip, and a possible leg length discrepancy. I took her to see her Doctor, who found that she did have a significant leg length differential, and referred us to the Children’s Hospital. It was at her appointment with the consultant on the 2nd Aug 2006 that she was diagnosed with DDH.

Her initial operation date was postponed due to illness. But on the 14th March 2007 she underwent surgery to correct the problem, followed by 6 weeks in a Hip Spica. This was the most distressing time of my parenting life and it was over 4 weeks before Rowana



began to show signs of being her normal self again. Unfortunately the operation was unsuccessful and she had to undergo more invasive surgery later in the year, followed by 3 months in the Hip Spica. This time we were all much more prepared, and although she had her thigh broken and re-set this time, she bounced back much more quickly. After just 2 weeks she was walking holding on to push along toys, and by the end of her 3 months she could not just walk, but dance, unaided in her plaster!

The whole process did knock her confidence quite a lot. Her speech was set back and our confident little girl become very clingy, awkward around other children, and fearful of medical staff in uniforms!! However, she has bounced back loads, and is now almost back to her normal self - even being cheeky to her nursery staff! She still gets very up set around staff in uniform and with children who get a little too close for comfort, but her speech is developing normally for a child of her age and she can walk for quite some time before becoming tired. She has an operation soon to remove the metal plate in her thigh, but we hope that this will just be minor and have little impact on her development.



During her diagnoses the consultant recommended that we contact the **steps** Charity via their website. I emailed them about Rowana's case and they sent me some useful information, including the ('BMA award winning') leaflet they produced for Baby Hip Health Week a few years ago. They gave lots of useful help and advice, and as a result I petitioned the Hospital where she was born to change their policy, as at the time they did not Ultrasound Breech babies due to a lack of qualified staff. Our plea was successful and as of Feb 2008 all breech babies born at that hospital will receive a hip ultrasound.

- DDH is not just one condition, but describes a range of conditions from mild instability and or immaturity to the severe end of the spectrum where the hip is totally dislocated.
- DDH underlies up to 9% of all primary hip replacements and up to 29% of those people aged under 60 years and younger.
- STEPS is a national charity whose purpose is to drive forward the provision of quality support and information to empower everyone affected by all lower limb conditions - such as clubfoot and hip dysplasia. *We don't take walking for granted!*

Anyone wishing to get further advice or to help distribute leaflets should contact the **steps** helpline on 0871 717 0044 or go to www.steps-charity.org.uk