

## Developmental Pediatrics

**Title:** THE JOURNEY TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT LIFE

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**Background:** We will outline the Therapy philosophy and interventions used by the Occupational Therapist (OT) and Physiotherapists (PT) who work with neonates and children referred to the Spina Bifida Team at The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW), Sydney, Australia. We will demonstrate our involvement in a multidisciplinary Spina Bifida Team and how we provide/impart specialist knowledge to families and community teams, including teachers/therapists.

The Team aims to facilitate and maximise the development of happy, health, competent, independent, adults who are able to integrate into their communities.

**Method:** Our aim is for every child to enhance their gross-motor development by assisting in achieving their milestones including standing/walking, be it with /without aids and orthoses. We also address fine motor and cognitive needs. We aim to ensure each child participates as fully and independently as possible in preschool, school, within their family unit/community. Through clinical reasoning and research based indicators, decisions regarding goal planning are made in conjunction with the Team, child/family and other involved. Physiotherapists manage musculoskeletal changes that may occur as a result of their disability and its impact on physical activity.

**Results:** Interventions, resources, strategies that have been produced both through research and experience are used to facilitate the process of maximising the child's development. Assessment, therapy programmes, equipment and teaching resources will be presented including the CD produced by the Teacher and OT on strategies for structuring tasks to maximise learning and transferring the skills into different situations.

**Conclusion:** By sharing our programme, we hope to demonstrate that we have improved our therapy and clinical reasoning, towards best practice. We strive to improve. "The greatest sign of a success for a teacher is to be able to say, the children are now working as if I don't exist. The hardest thing for a parent is to allow them to do that" (Maria Montessori).