The Story of Federico

It all started towards the end of April 2002, when Federico was 17 months old. During a routine visit to Federico's pediatrician, we told the doctor that we had noted the appearance of several small pimple-like bumps in the child's abdominal region. These bumps would cause an itching sensation, especially during the night, and Federico would scratch himself and thus hurt his skin.

The doctor recommended an ointment for the affected body parts, and Loratil, suspecting the presence of a possible allergic reaction. We followed his suggestion.

On May 10th 2002, we took Federico once again to the pediatrician. This time, the bumps had extended over most of Federico's body, covering parts such as the chest, cheeks and knees. His skin appeared yellowish, thickened and shiny.

It was July 22nd 2002, and despite following the doctor's directions, the spots on Federico's skin continued to advance to other body parts and the itchiness continued. Hence, we asked the pediatrician to refer us to a dermatologist, with whom we scheduled an appointment immediately.

We met with the dermatologist the following day. In light of the exceptional nature of the case, she referred us to a specialist in pediatric dermatology in Montevideo and ordered thorough blood and urine tests.

By now, Federico's skin was very hardened, with a plastic-like texture. This complicated significantly drawing the blood, and we were disconsolate to watch our child crying desperately each time the needle poked into his body.

On July 28th 2002, we finally saw the pediatric dermatologist in Montevideo. On that day, we heard for the first time about an illness called Scleroderma, and were provided with few details about the nature of the disease.

Given that we were having several problems with obtaining the results of the blood tests, we decided to interrupt the visits to Montevideo.

On August 21st 2002 we took Federico for a consultation with a new pediatrician. This doctor examined Federico very thoroughly, and noted that apart from the hardness and the spots in Federico's skin, our son walked with bent knees, that he could not stretch his fingers or his toes, that he had edematous eyelids and that his arterial pressure was out of control.

The director of the medical center we were at was then consulted, and she ordered Federico's immediate trip to Montevideo: he was put under strict observation in a hospital, and the blood and urine tests were then repeated in full, given that, beyond our belief, some of Federico's previous blood and urine tests had been misplaced.

Federico stayed at the hospital for 3 days, during which he was seen by several medical professionals, who reported to us what they found to be wrong with our child's health and who gave us further information on the nature of Scleroderma as a disease.

On August 27th 2002, towards confirming or discarding the Scleroderma diagnosis, a biopsy of the skin on Federico's upper back region was performed at a medical athenaeum at the Pereira Rossell Children's Hospital in Montevideo. Even before the results of the biopsy were ready, Federico was started on 15 mg per day of Prednisone, as well as hot water baths 4-5 times a day, and intensive physiotherapy. We followed these recommendations strictly.

2 months passed before the results of the biopsy were ready. The Scleroderma diagnosis was confirmed. We were deeply anguished by this result, given that we saw that, despite our efforts, the disease would not reverse its course, and that we thought that there was nothing we could do to help our son.

We did not know whom to turn to for help. In the preceding 9 months, we had faced great negligence from the part of the medical center Federico was, and still is a member of, evidenced by the misplacement and delay of blood tests, as well as by a lack of support from the doctors and the director of the medical center.

As time passed, we continued to see the limitations in our child worsen day by day: Federico could no longer hold a glass in his hands, let alone a fork or a spoon. He had trouble getting up from a chair, and would ask for help to do so. Federico could no longer run or jump: he would walk dragging his feet, and he would sob in pain when we tried to hug him or to seat him on our shoulders.

Towards the end of December 2002, upon learning that our son had the same disease as himself, Mr. Richard Deganello approached us and told us about a Graviational Therapy Center in Montevideo. He said that he had undergone therapy at this center, and that it had improved the quality of his life. Additionally, Richard mentioned that a TV program in Channel 4, "Quality of Life", was going to put on a program about this issue in the near future. It sufficed for us to watch the TV program and to listen to Richard's words, in order to for us to contact immediately the Gravitational Therapy Center, and to set up an appointment to come visit it. At the center, we were assured that, despite our child's young age, he would heal. It was a matter of slowly getting him off the Prednizone, that he continued to take at that point, and helping him adapt to the Gravitational Therapy Center environment.

It was that day, that marked a clear cut between the before and the after: what seemed a path with no return, a disease that would relentlessly advance with no hope of reversing its course, was counteracted by the first session of gravitational therapy. These sessions were repeated weekly, and every Tuesday, we would see the improvement in our son's condition with the naked eye. Federico's skin changed color, and it was no longer so tight. Our son started moving his hands once again: he could now open and close them, and he could now stretch his fingers, which were no longer claw-like. His feet, which had lost motility, started regaining motion bit by bit. His ears were no longer rigid, and his hands were no longer cold when he would caress us.

Today, Federico is able to run, jump, and roll on himself on the floor. He has stretched his knees, the spots on his skin are almost gone, and the thickening of the skin has receded almost completely. We have the Gravitational Therapy Center to thank for this, given that we feel that it gave us Federico’s life back, and that it gave us the strength to keep on trying, and to accompany Federico through the process of healing. We are now hopeful that Federico will one day be a healthy child with no limitations.

We would also like to mention the help that Professor Cela provided us with, through performing massage therapy on Federico free of charge. We would also like to thank Graciela and Clarita at the Gravitational Therapy Center for their love and care, as well as Richard. We also want to thank our friends, family and neighbors, as well as the other patients in the clinic, that continue to encourage us day by day.

Finally, we want to thank Drs. Eloisa and Susana Isasi, thanks to whom Federico’s condition has significantly improved, giving him back his life, and supporting us unconditionally during the hard times we have gone through.

Sincerely,

Lucia Tourn and Oscar Pages Federico’s parents.