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Physiotherapy Report

Tamsin Colley

Tamsin presents as a consistently delightful, intelligent and cooperative physiotherapy client. She is well known to our department, having been diagnosed with a pilocytic astrocytoma in early 2004, which was removed on 31/3/04. Although successful in removing the tumour, Tamsin has been left with residual problems following her surgery, mainly that she is severely ataxic (i.e. she has severe deficits in coordination and balance). She began attending physiotherapy as an outpatient on 20/4/2004, and these problems have been apparent ever since. She still has ongoing scans (2 yearly) and follow up medical appointments.

Tamsin was recently assessed using the Peabody Developmental Motor Scales. There are 6 areas of assessment in these scales, and the ones relevant to gross motor function are:

Stationary (looking largely at balance)

Locomotion (looking at items such as walking, running, jumping), and

Object manipulation (looking at ball skills, throwing, catching, kicking)

We tested Tamsin in mid February, over a period of 4 weeks, starting on 16/2/2007, at which time she was 4yrs and 5months, i.e. 53months of age. Here are Tamsin's results for the 3 subtests:

	percentile rank	standard deviation	age equivalent
stationary	16	-1	43months
locomotion	2	-2	22months
object manipulation	16	-1	39 months

Obviously, the area of locomotion is the lowest area of Tamsin's performance, being 2 standard deviations below the mean. Although not directly reflected in the above scores, it is worth noting that Tamsin's gross motor skills are all slow, and that it did take 4 attendances to assess her, which is longer than usual.

We also had 2 school visits recently, on 2/3/2007 and 23/3/2007, to test her mobility and ease of handling toilets etc on site. Although a little unsteady at times, Tamsin is fairly good at mobilising inside, and doesn't require a walking frame. Tamsin coped well with inside mobility in the classroom and in the common toilet cubicles (i.e. the toilets used by everyone), just occasionally using natural supports like walls and desks, but without any great reliance on them. It would be wise to seat her near the front of the classroom to minimise obstacles.

Outside, Tamsin's mobility is far less reliable and presents more of a challenge. Any departure from a level surface leaves her balance far more precarious. She is faster and safer outside with her wheeled walking frame and Tamsin coped well in the playground with her walking frame as she was able to mobilise independently with it. She was able to slowly but safely walk from the kindergarten classrooms to the far end of the sportsfield, one of the longest distances in the school. However, it is important to note that she was still slow, taking almost 20 minutes to walk from the classroom to the sportsfield and back again. She may well need extra time to walk anywhere in the school, and she will need to use her wheelchair and have someone to push it for any offsite excursions.

The playground equipment proved difficult for Tamsin. She shouldn't go on it without adult assistance. However, the rest of the school ground surface was easy to negotiate, with Tamsin coping well, albeit slowly with grass, pine bark and the concrete. The main problem was simply time.

We didn't attempt any stairs during the school visit, because we know very well that Tamsin is unsafe on stairs without a rail and will need adult supervision, whether there is a rail or not.

I would envisage that Tamsin would need adult assistance for offsite visits. She may also need it for walking long distances, toileting, and perhaps for sport. The object manipulation scores on the Peabody indicate that Tamsin will have difficulty engaging in most sports. As with any child, physical activity is important, so sport may need modified activities in which Tamsin can participate. I'm happy to do another school visit for this if needed.

Toileting was raised as an issue during the first school visit simply because it was not clearcut which toilets should be used. During her second school visit, Tamsin was able to safely and independently use her walking frame to get to the common toilets, leave her walker outside and walk inside to the cubicles, just using the occasional natural support of the wall. Alternatively, she was also able to take her walker inside, and leave it just outside the cubicle. She went to the toilet and coped well, but it would have been easier if the toilet was lower and if the toilet paper had been within easier reach. She will also need a rail to steady herself when wiping.

I feel sure Tamsin will be a competent and reliable student in the school, once some supports are in place. Hoping this report helps describe her abilities to you,

Yours sincerely,


Judith Hall

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