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Hips on Track: Hip Surveillance for Children with CP

What is the problem?

Hip displacement is a serious complication of cerebral palsy (CP), occurring in 85 percent of non-ambulant children. It develops insidiously. If detected early, treatment is effective. If not, hip dislocation occurs, causing intractable pain, reduced function and quality of life extending across the lifespan. There is no effective treatment for hip dislocation.

About this research translation project

Hip surveillance is an evidence-based process to detect early hip displacement through regular X-rays for the right children at the right times. Following national clinical guidelines, effective hip surveillance facilitates timely referral for orthopaedic care, reducing the risk of hip dislocation. It is often overlooked in children with complex and multiple problems. Those living outside metropolitan areas are particularly at risk for missing out on this important aspect of care.

Using the Victorian Cerebral Palsy Register and a customised data portal, we will implement a state-wide hip surveillance program. Recent research involving both consumers and health professionals identified barriers and inefficiencies in the current delivery of hip surveillance to children with CP in Victoria. This work has informed a proposed model involving "hubs" at The Royal Children's Hospital and the Monash Children's, supporting "spokes" at regional centres. Essential facets of the program will include centralised coordination, reminders to health professionals and families when hip surveillance is due, clinician training, quality control and program evaluation (e.g. X-ray timing, referral pathways for orthopaedic care).

Establishment of this program will eliminate variations in care, will build collaboration across health providers throughout Victoria and improve clinical pathways for a vulnerable group of children.

What will be the impact?

A state-wide hip surveillance program will be implemented for Victorian children with CP, including governance and evaluation processes. By reducing the incidence of hip dislocation, long-term impacts will include avoidance of life-long pain and loss of function, additional burden of care to families, and substantial cost savings to the health care system.

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