

## By Richard Dennis

Editorial Staff

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In a recent issue of "DC," a chiropractor -- and also father of a boy with Duchenne muscular dystrophy -- wrote that it was "utter nonsense" that the Ward Clinic's Duchenne MD treatment program might slow, stop and/or reverse this degenerative, terminal disease.

The doctor/father wrote a frustrated, emotional letter. I know the feeling. The MDs gave my son the same death sentence. But before you reach any conclusions, hear my story.

If all the chiropractors on earth had been eaten by velociraptors in 1989, I wouldn't have noticed the difference. Well, I may have noticed the dinosaurs, but not the missing DCs. Things have changed.

I've driven a county bus in Miami, Florida since 1978. My wife Cheryl and I have four kids. On Sept. 26, 1989, we were shocked to learn that our youngest son, Garth, age four, had Duchenne muscular dystrophy. His future? A wheel chair by age 10-12, then death from respiratory failure a few years later.

We had two alternatives: Accept the inexorable degeneration and inevitable early death offered us by the MDs, or not accept it. We chose the latter. The only certainty was that orthodox medicine had no answers.

After many dead ends, I found Lowell Ward, DC. He was the first person who didn't say, "No hope." He said: "We treat the spinal meningeal system, which helps the body defend against disease. In many cases, our techniques put defense back into the spinal meningeal system. At a minimum, you have a chance of greatly slowing down the progress of the disease."

Dr. Ward made no promises, except to look at Garth's x-rays. On Aug. 7, 1991, our son became the first boy in the Ward Clinic's now famous Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy treatment program.

### Garth Today

Emotionally, Garth is very well adjusted, with a terrific sense of humor. Sept. 13th was Garth's 8th birthday. He got a new 24" bike. He rides every day, as much as several miles. Garth could ride before we took him to Dr. Ward, but not well; he wasn't strong. Garth can't run, but on a bike, he's close to the other boys' physical equal. I believe it is only Dr. Ward's technology which has allowed Garth to maintain and increase the strength and balance necessary to get on and off and to pedal his bike.

Garth had frequent respiratory ailments at one time; they've all but disappeared since the treatment began. Before treatment, Garth routinely fell several times a day while walking. Now it's not unusual for him to go two to three days or more between falls. His spine is far more flexible

than before, and he can bend down and pick stuff off the floor, something he couldn't do before. He can run maybe ten steps now.

Negatives? Yes, one. Before treatment, he couldn't get up off the floor by himself. After some months in the program, he could awkwardly do it. Now, once again, he can't get up without help.

We don't know the future. Garth's condition could revert tomorrow, but he's had more than two years of greater ability than he would otherwise have had. That a lot to an eight year-old.

A group called the National Council Against Health Fraud referred to Dr. Ward's work as "utter nonsense." Ward Clinic doctors have now treated about 70 Duchenne boys. More than 20 percent of the boys in the program have been treated, and will continue for years to be treated, free of charge. The clinic is footing the bill; other parents have paid a bare-bones price. So far as I know, the doctors have not turned away any parents who wanted their son in the program.

Ward Clinic doctors have spent dozens of hours on my son's case alone. Both Dr. Stephen Ward and Dr. Joseph Bahan (twice) have flown to Florida to check Garth's progress, and work with Dr. Eric Gren, the local chiropractor who treats Garth -- all at their own expense.

What really hooked me was Dr. Ward's scrupulous scientific documentation. He takes standing and seated x-rays, front and lateral views. Dr. Ward's experience is that with a degenerative disease, especially the early stages, it's likely that only the seated x-ray will show the devastation. Significant distances and angles are measured on the films. A computer compares these numbers to the "ideal normals" for a boy of Garth's height.

Now some doctors are legitimately skeptical of the notion of ideal normals. How can you determine normals? I'm not Dr. Ward, but I believe I have the criteria right: the plane of the top of the pelvis is level; the vertebrae are stacked one on top of the other; the midpoint of the dens and the second sacral tubercle are in vertical alignment; normal lumbar lordosis with the midpoint of the third lumbar centered over the anterior tip of the sacral base; thoracic apex at T-6-7; normal cervical lordosis, cervical apex at C-4.

Of course, nobody on x-ray ever achieves their ideal normals, but you do have a standard of comparison and a means of measuring progress over time. Chiropractic devices and adjustments are used to get the spine back to normal measurements. What good does it do for a Duchenne boy to sit on a foam wedge? Well, if his seated spine is 18 cm forward of ideal normal, as is Garth's, a Duchenne boy who sits hours in that position is in trouble. The wedge gently moves the spine backward, relieving the stress of the forward curvature.

There's nothing mystical about my son's treatment. Five or six nights a week, Garth and I do the "meningeal exercises" to keep the meninges flexible. One night in July of 1992, 10 months after we began these exercises, Garth suddenly bent over much farther backward than before. The next day, he reach down and picked up a toy. At age seven, my son had been unable to bend down and pick something up off the floor. Garth can touch his toes without bending his knees. I'll bet you couldn't find one Duchenne boy in 500 who can do this ... unless he been treated by Dr. Ward.

*Richard Dennis  
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Editor's note: We had to shorten Mr. Dennis' article to conform to our space limitations, but Mr. Dennis has offered to send a copy of the full article to any doctor who requests one. Just call his voice mail at 1-800-576-8564. P.S. Are thoughts are with you, Garth.

DC

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