

Meredith Anne's Case



Our daughter Meredith Anne was born in December 2005. She was born with a cleft lip and palate. During the first few months of her life, we concentrated completely on taking the necessary steps to repair her cleft. When she was 5 months old, we noticed a hump on her back. We rushed to the pediatrician who referred us to our local orthopedic surgeon, who then officially diagnosed her with infantile

scoliosis. When Meredith Anne turned 6 months old, she had surgery to repair her palate, and at the same time, she had an MRI done to rule out any underlying causes for the scoliosis. Her MRI came back clear.

At that time, her curve measured approximately 20 degrees. Our doctor recommended the wait and see approach since some infantile scoliosis cases resolve on their own. After waiting six more months, right after Meredith Anne's first birthday, an x-ray revealed she had progressed to 32 degrees, and so our serial casting journey began. Over the course of the next year, she received five casts, which she wore 2 to 3 months at a time. After her last cast was removed, she was measured at 5 degrees down from the 32 degrees a year before. She wore a brace for 23 hours a day for an additional year, as was the protocol. She maintained her correction in the brace during that year, and so we were given the go ahead to have her cast and brace free. We were ecstatic.

However, over the course of the next year we could tell that her curve and rotation were returning. Her x-ray revealed she was back up to 20 degrees. We were convinced that she would need to be re-casted. We scheduled an appointment with her casting surgeon who was out of state. The next available appointment for casting was two months away, so while we waited we visited our local orthopedic surgeon who recommended a providence brace to be worn at night. We agreed,

thinking it would provide her some type of support while we waited for our casting appointment.

We visited our orthotist Amy Street, so that Meredith Anne could be measured for her providence brace. During the appointment, we began chatting with Amy about Meredith Anne's journey and told her that even though we were having the brace made, ultimately we had an appointment for casting. Amy mentioned to us that she had just returned from a seminar led by Dr. Miguel Gomez who was using TLSO braces to treat scoliosis. We came home and started our research and also spoke to a parent whose daughter was wearing Dr. Gomez' brace.

At this point, we were at a real crossroads regarding Meredith Anne's treatment. Meredith Anne was now 4 years old and was taking swimming lessons, ballet and taking part in other activities. If she were casted, she would have no freedom to take part in any of these activities. If she were braced, she could take the brace off to exercise and work her muscles. Our first priority has always been to make sure we treat the scoliosis and avoid any type of surgery involving growing rods or fusion. After much consideration, we decided to begin seeing Dr. Gomez.

So in March 2010, we flew to Houston, Texas with our local orthotist Amy Street to have Meredith Anne fitted for her first brace. We were in Houston for 4 days. During our first appointment in Houston, Dr. Gomez evaluated Meredith Anne and took all the measurements and pictures necessary to have her brace made. We were so impressed with him. We cannot adequately express what a caring and compassionate person Dr. Gomez is. He took the time to answer all our questions, address our concerns and most importantly to make Meredith Anne feel completely at ease.

After a few days, Meredith Anne's first brace was ready. To be honest, the first 10 days Meredith Anne wore her brace were extremely difficult. Dr. Gomez told us it would be hard but to stick with it and she would adjust. She wore the brace 3 hours the first day, and we increased the time she wore the brace by 3 hours a day until she was wearing it 23 hours a day. Dr. Gomez told us that it would be hard the first week or so because the deformity was fighting the brace, and if she wore the brace as prescribed eventually the brace would win. It did.

Meredith Anne adjusted to the brace and has been very good about wearing it. We always follow the time constraints Dr. Gomez has prescribed for Meredith Anne wearing her brace. After a year in her

brace, her curve and rotation have both dramatically improved. Although, we do not understand all the details that make these braces work, Dr. Gomez stressed the importance of balance and symmetry. Meredith Anne no longer leans to one side and is more symmetrical and balanced than ever before. When she had her last x-ray out of her brace, there was only a very slight curve, a substantial improvement from where we started.

In March 2011, she received her second brace, which is not as aggressive. She now wears the brace 18 hours a day and loves the increased freedom. We know that as she grows she may have to wear her brace more hours per day, but we are determined to see this through, so that she will never have any spinal surgery but instead be treated in a gentle, non-surgical way.

We have to admit that sometimes it's hard to think that she will be in a brace until puberty, but what is even harder for us to think about is Meredith Anne having fusion or growing rod surgery, which will affect the rest of her life. We try to make wearing the brace as positive as we can for her and to explain that it is something she needs to wear so that later she will never have to worry about her back again. We can't say she never complains, but we encourage her and try to help her build her self-confidence.

Meredith Anne has never been limited by her brace. She gets to take it off for swimming lessons, ballet, soccer, physical therapy and even gets time out to enjoy some well-deserved fun at the beach. She wears it to school and her teachers say she never complains and keeps up with all the other kids in whatever activity they are participating in. We always push her to try her best and she is a very determined and independent little girl. We know that this experience although not easy will make her a stronger person in the future.

We would like to thank Dr. Gomez for being so caring and committed to treating our daughter so that she may never need surgical intervention. Although we do not live close to Dr. Gomez, he is always in touch and involved in every aspect of Meredith Anne's scoliosis treatment. We cannot adequately express how grateful we are to him for all he has done to help our daughter.

Sincerely,

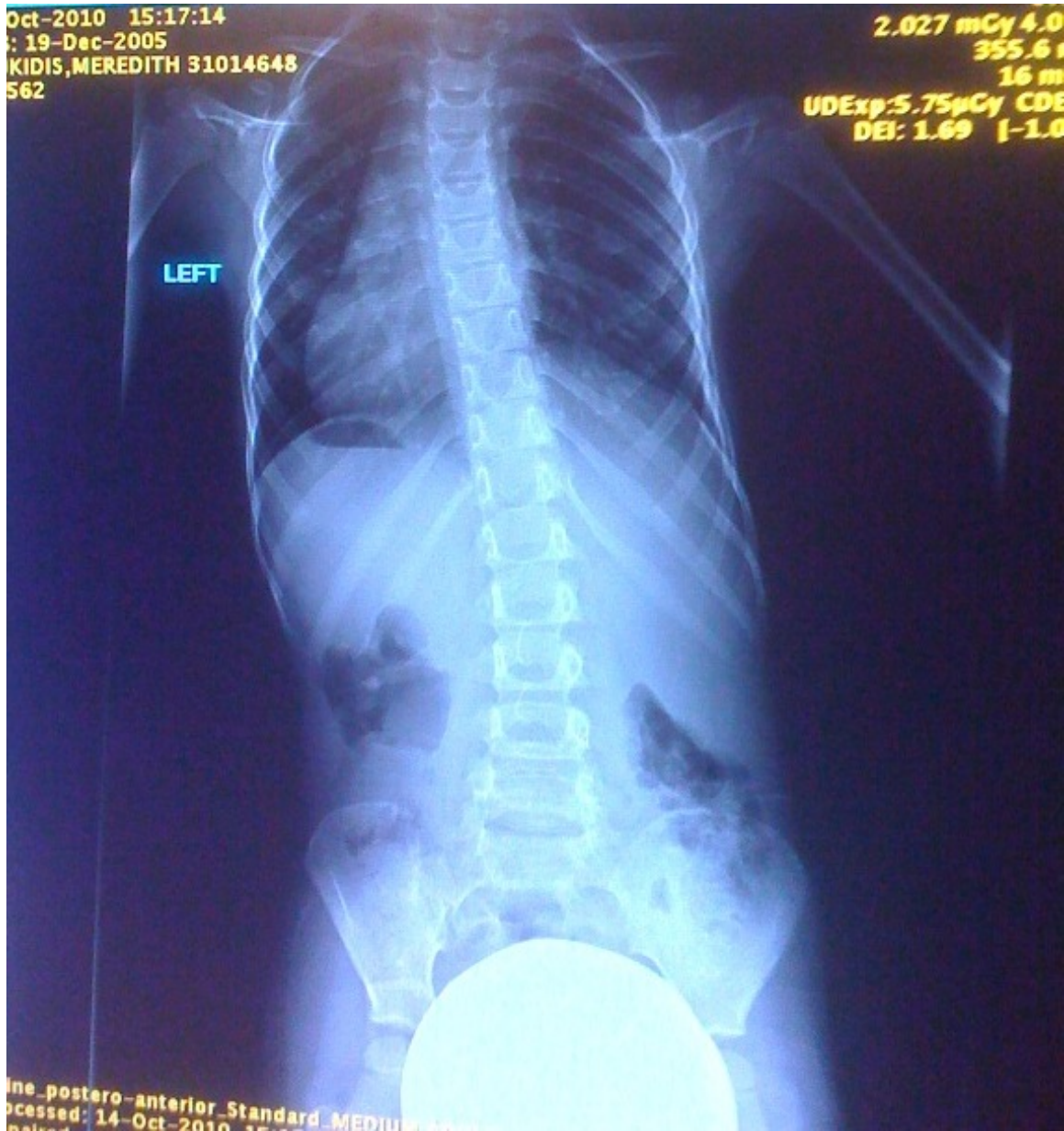
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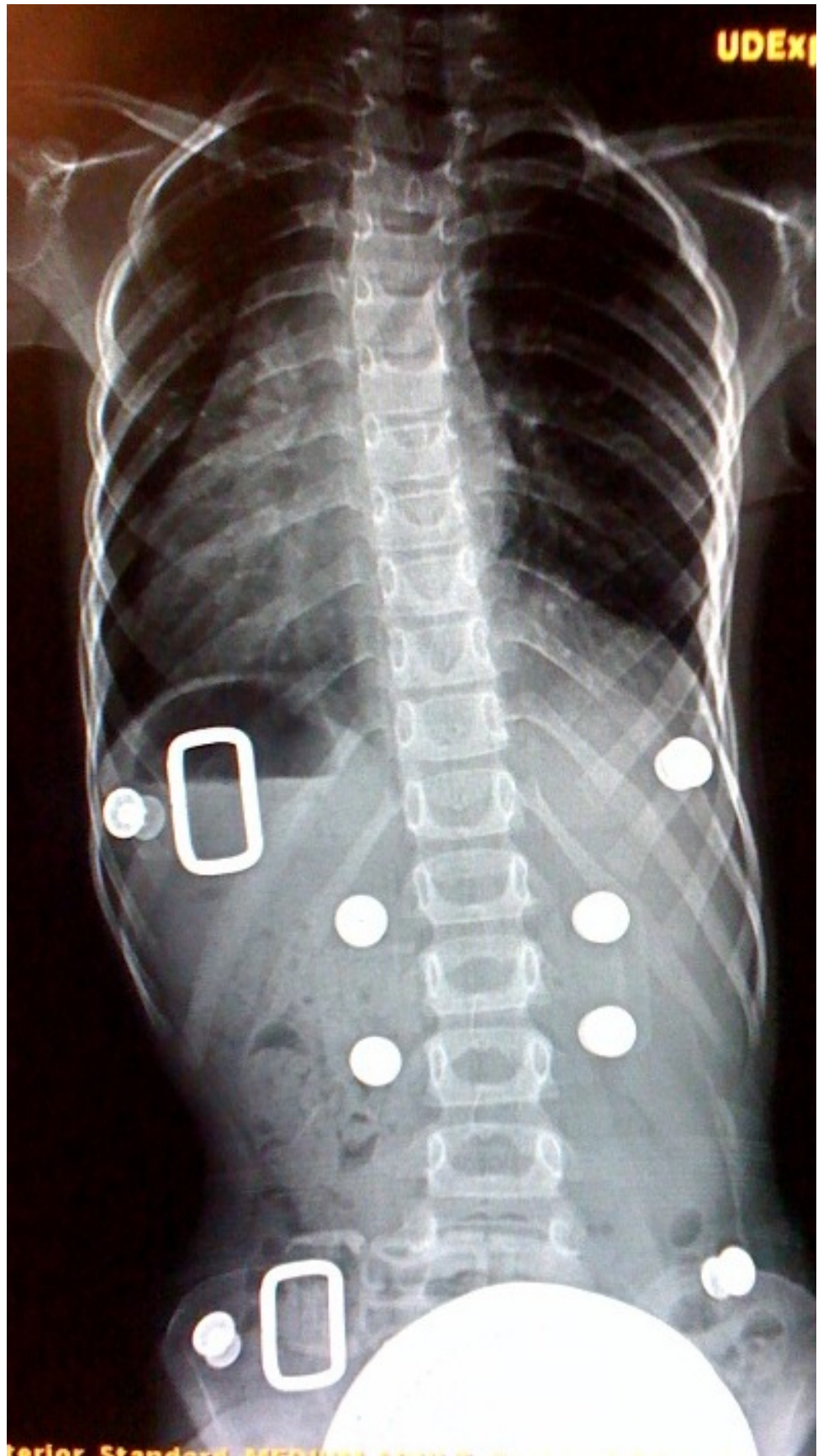
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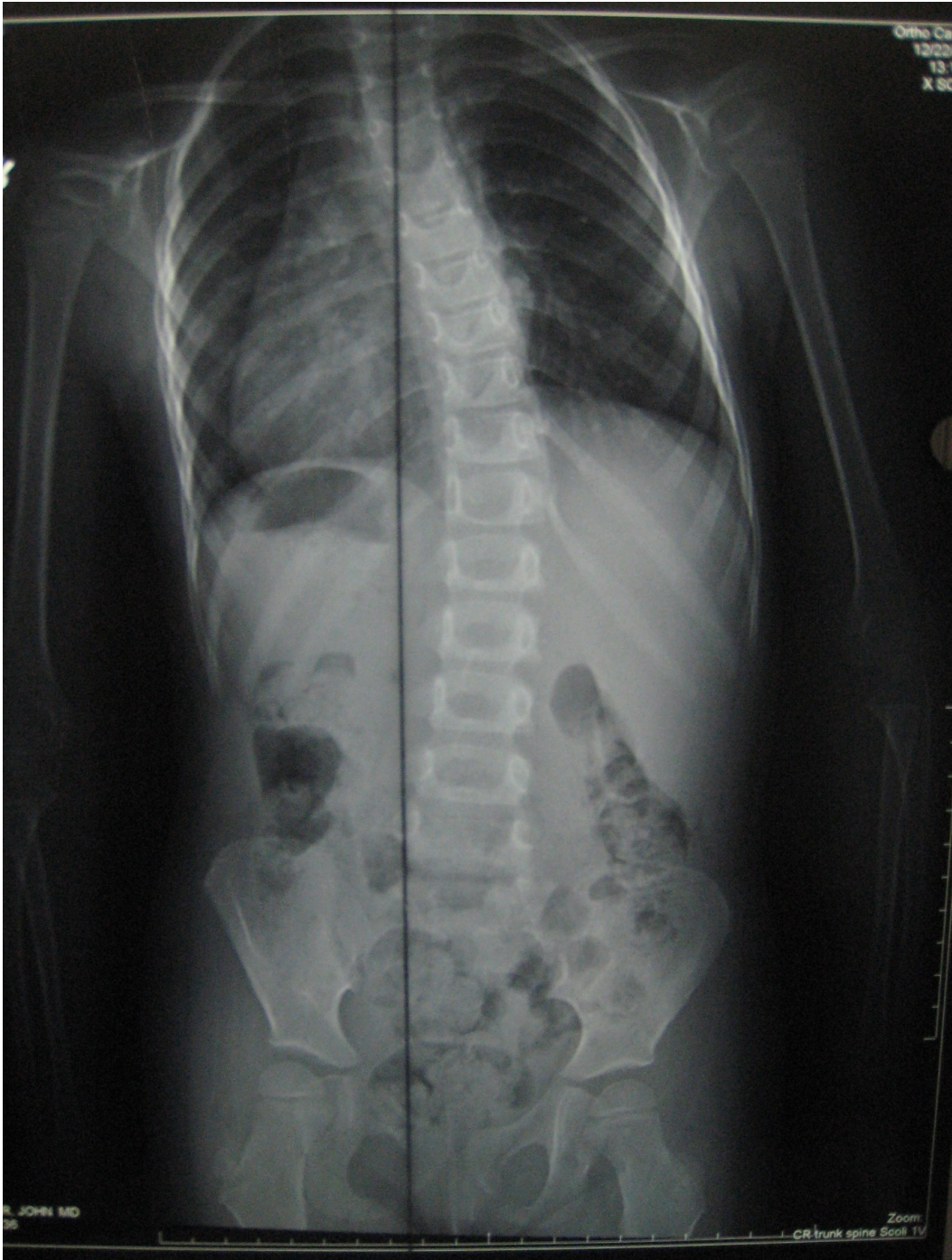
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