



Sinai Connections

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Against all odds, Schwab doctor helps family transform future

The staff at the suburban hospital told Jen's husband to prepare for two funerals within days – one for his wife, and one for his newborn baby.

Early in her pregnancy, Jen had pre-eclampsia – dangerously elevated blood pressure. When doctors induced delivery at just 25 weeks, they gave her and her baby a 10% chance of living. In a coma for three days after delivery, Jen awoke alone in her hospital room. She saw pictures of her baby and a sheet of paper with little ink footprints on it. She assumed her child had passed away – until a nurse came in and told her the good news: Colton was alive.

He weighed 1 pound, 4 ounces, and fit in Jen's palm. His organs showed through his translucent skin.

Doctors told Jen that if Colton survived his early months, any effects of his early delivery would surface when he was about two years old. They were right: that's when he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Pronounced too tiny for certain therapies, they said he would never progress past the developmental stage of a one year-old.

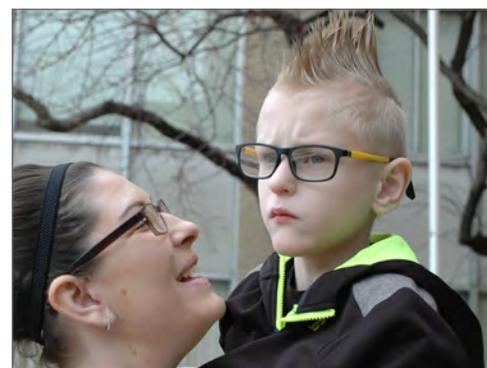
Confronted with this negative outlook, and on 30-month waiting lists for other doctors, Jen then met Dr. Lisa Thornton, a pediatric rehabilitation doctor at Sinai's Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital.

A specialist in cerebral palsy, Dr. Thornton advocated for progressive therapies that pushed Colton's development. She tried – with success – medications other physicians said wouldn't work. She gave Colton a walker and leg braces, and after a mix of therapies, Colton began to walk by himself at the age of four.

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Again, Dr. Thornton was right. “This past year has been amazing. Now Colton runs through the whole house!” Jen says. She remembers when Colton's teachers were just focused on keeping him from



putting objects in his mouth; now they report he is meeting his goals, and they have to create new ones.

Jen insists Colton is much like every other 7-year-old. “He loves to be outside. He loves to swim. When we went to Universal Studios and Disney World this past winter, he went on every single roller coaster he could!” He also gets into trouble and takes time-outs, and roughhouses with his 6-year-old brother.

The hardest part for Jen is thinking about when Colton gets older. Tears sprung to her eyes when she said, “What happens when my husband and I aren't around? Our daughter says she wants to be a doctor...she says ‘Don't worry, Mom, Colton will live with me. I will take care of him.’ It's so sweet. I guess I did something right as a parent.”

Jen says, “This past year has been amazing, and it's because of all the hard work Dr. Thornton and I have done. If we hadn't met her, I don't think we'd be where we are today.”