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L.A. Boy Travels to Phoenix for the Treatment of a Rare Spine Condition that Nearly Left Him Paralyzed

Neurosurgeons at Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center have successfully removed a rare and complex spinal lesion from a 12-year-old boy eliminating the youngster's prognosis of becoming a permanent paraplegic.

Jesse Cook is now recovering successfully at St. Joseph's and is expected to make a full recovery.

"We were told that the type of lesion Jesse had was extremely uncommon for his age and surgery was next to impossible," says Jesse's mom, Ann Marie. "We were prepared for the worst case scenario and are grateful to Barrow."

Jesse, who lives in Simi Valley, California, first noticed symptoms in September when he came down with a stomach virus and complained of excruciating pain in his left arm. His parents took him to their local Emergency Department where he lost feeling in all his extremities, paralyzing him for nearly 15 hours. He had limited function in his arm for six weeks. Doctors diagnosed an arteriovenous malformation (AVM), a very rare neurological disorder that causes abnormal tangles of arteries and veins in his spine. He was sent to Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Once at Children's, Jesse's team of neurosurgeons detected the complexity of the AVM and referred him to Barrow for treatment. **Barrow doctors found that Jesse's AVM was even more severe than originally believed – the AVM was feeding blood into his spinal cord increasing his risk for paralysis.**

Jesse underwent complex surgery last week at Barrow from leading neurosurgeons Robert Spetzler, MD, director of Barrow; and Felipe Albuquerque, MD. Both neurosurgeons are experts in their field for treating AVM's and Jesse had the best chance for a positive outcome with their expertise. **Without surgery, Jesse had a high chance of becoming a quadriplegic. Because of the location and complexity of Jesse's AVM, the surgery itself had risks for paraplegia. The neurosurgeons were able to completely remove Jesse's malformation.**

"Jesse's AVM was very rare and was one of the most difficult cases," says Dr. Spetzler. "I'm pleased that his surgery was very successful and his prognosis is excellent."

"We were told by so many people how risky my surgery would be that I was shocked when I woke up after surgery and learned that I didn't have any bad deficits," says Jesse. "I'm very thankful."

Jesse is looking forward to returning home to see his friends and siblings. In the meantime, he's busy drafting football plays and asking hospital staff to sign his football. Although he may never be

able to play football again, he has big dreams of becoming an attorney to negotiate player contracts.

“Words cannot describe how grateful I am,” says Ann Marie. “My son has a chance to be successful one day because of Dr. Spetzler and Barrow.”

— St. Joseph’s —