Marrakech, MOROCCO: Harnessing Brain Plasticity

Jalal, 6 years old, came to The Moulay Ali Institute for Rehabilitation (MAIR) with damage to his brachial plexus significantly affecting his arm and hand on the left side. As a result, Jalal was not permitted in pre-school last year. The brachial plexus is a group of nerves that control the muscles of the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand, and deliver feeling in the arm. If this group of nerves is damaged, signals to and from the brain may stop, resulting in the muscles of the arm and hand working improperly, and causing loss of feeling in the area.

MAIR, located in Marrakech, Morocco, was created by the Zahra Charity, with a mission to provide access to neurological rehabilitative care for patients suffering from traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, stroke, tumors, cerebral palsy, and infections affecting the central nervous system. Recognizing that there was a severe deficit in neuro-rehabilitation care in Morocco, the Zahra Charity remodeled an existing building to house MAIR in August 2015.

Soon after their opening, Jalal and his mom began traveling 90 mins one way, three times per week, to receive therapy. The therapists applied the principals of constraint induced therapy, a technique that encourages neuroplasticity by inducing the patient into using the affected limb as if it were still 100% healthy. For Jalal, therapists began using activities that were fun, and that would interest him, thus improving the chances for “neuroplastic change” to take place.

Before Jalal came to MAIR, he could not tie his shoelaces. When Jalal and his mother walked away from his last therapy appointment at the end of May 2016, not only could Jalal tie his shoelaces, but he was also able to move his arm in all directions, reach for items above his head, and grasp objects with improved strength. After his successful recovery at MAIR, Jalal is ready to enjoy his summer vacation and attend school in the fall, without any objection from school officials.

Donations to Globus Relief support the Zahra Charity and many other charitable organizations, improving access to health care for people throughout the world. To donate medical resources, please contact Globus Relief.

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