

Child comes to state for unusual surgery

Local people touched by boy from Ecuador

By Robyn Adams
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WATERBURY — Isai Misael Garzón Cruz is like most 5-year-old boys, curious and playful.

But unlike most boys his age, Isai has a rare nonhereditary, congenital abnormality called macrodactyly, in which there is an enlargement of the bone and soft tissues of a digit.

Isai's second toe on his left foot is four times larger than his big toe. He learned to walk with the deformity and to withstand pain that comes from running and jumping. The deformity is not restricted to either sex, but is predominant in males. It becomes more pronounced as a child grows

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Josalee Thrift / Republican-American

Isai Misael Garzon Cruz, 5, plays in the lobby of Dr. Robert Porzio's office before meeting the doctor Wednesday morning. Cruz suffers from a rare abnormality in which one of his toes is four times larger than his big toe.

TOE: Local missionary initiates process that will change boy's life

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Early Tuesday morning, Isai and his mother, Lilian Cruz, 43, left their home in the village of Conocoto, Ecuador, for a 15-hour trip to Connecticut, where doctors will perform surgery on the boy's foot Friday at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

The trip and surgery were made possible by a host of people but spirited by Pedro Velez, a local missionary who first met the boy during a visit last September to Quito, Ecuador. Velez noticed the boy wince when jumping. He asked why and the boy took off his shoe.

Velez returned to Waterbury. He told Dr. Robert Porzio, his chiropractor, about Isai and his wish to help the boy be as normal as possible. Dr. Porzio talked to his brother-in-law, Dr. Charles Arena, a podiatrist who in turn talked to Dr. Peter Blume, director of limb preservation at the Yale School of Medicine.

On Wednesday, Isai and his mom met Dr. Porzio and Dr. Arena.

Dr. Porzio's patient, Marion Barnes, who is in the Marketing Department at Yale-New Haven, was instrumental in getting Dr. Blume, renowned in his field, to get involved.

"Marion was the catalyst that got Dr. Blume and Yale involved in this," Dr. Porzio said.

The dark-haired boy had his foot x-rayed at Dr. Arena's West Main Street office. The first x-ray Dr. Arena looked

at was taken in Ecuador and made available to him in February.

"The toe looks like it has grown larger than the last time we saw it," Dr. Arena said. "But it is workable and with surgery, we can give him a better result than he has now."

The large toe is soft and has a mass of extra soft tissue on the pad of his foot, making the toe appear floppy and boneless. Dr. Arena said the x-ray showed the bone in that toe is very large and extends the length of the toe.

There are two options: One is to amputate the deformed toe and do plastic surgery to bring the three smaller toes closer to the normal big toe. The other is to remove a portion of the deformed toe.

"All of that will be determined at the time of surgery," said Dr. Arena.

Dr. Arena will assist Dr. Blume during the surgery, being performed at no cost to Isai's family. Isai's recovery will be at least two weeks. He and his mom are expected to stay at the Ronald McDonald House up to a month.

Lilian Cruz, who does not speak English, and her son both understand what will be done to make Isai's gait easier and pain-free. Velez served as her translator. "God has a purpose in everything, and this is God's doing," Lilian Cruz said.

Velez has raised funds and arranged donations of frequent-flier miles to fly Cruz and his mother to Connecticut, where all of the medical services are being donated.

Surgeons fix Ecuadorian boy's deformed foot

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WATERBURY — Surgeons, after two hours Friday at Yale-New Haven Hospital, successfully removed a deformed toe that caused pain for an Ecuadorian boy.

Isai Misael Garzón Cruz, 5, and his mother, Lilian Cruz, came to Waterbury from their home in Conocoto, Ecuador late Tuesday night.

Isai was born with macrodactyly, a rare nonhereditary, congenital abnormality in which there is an enlargement of the bone and soft tissues of a digit.

The boy was discovered by Pedro Velez, a local missionary, during a visit to Quito, Ecuador, last fall. Velez told Dr. Robert Porzio, his chiropractor, who told Dr.



**Isai Misael
Garzón Cruz**

Charles Arena, a Waterbury podiatrist, about the boy's plight.

Dr. Peter Blume, director of limb preservation at the Yale School of Medicine, Arena and a host of other health professionals donated their services to do the surgery.

"Everything went very well," Arena said. "We amputated the toe, removed the tumor and straightened out his (other) three toes."

Isai and his mother will be in Connecticut for up to four weeks while he recuperates.