

Health

Pioneering diabetes device gives new solution for diabetic Kuwaiti children

Pioneering device helps deliver insulin by bypassing the skin

KUWAIT: Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London (GOSH) have successfully treated a British diabetic boy with a skin allergy to insulin thanks to a pioneering device which helps deliver insulin by bypassing the skin. Taylor Banks, nine, from the UK is the fifth child in the world to be fitted with a device with delivers insulin directly to his abdomen so it does not come into contact with his skin. Type 1 diabetes affects around 35 million people in the Middle East region, including around 61,000 children.

Allergies to insulin is rare, with an estimated incidence of <1% to 2.4% in insulin-treated diabetic patients, however the severity of skin reactions to insulin in this case were very unique. The youngster was first diagnosed with type 1 diabetes - where the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin - when he was two. He was rushed to hospital unconscious and treated with insulin which treated his diabetes but prompted a severe allergic reaction to the drug.

Speaking on Taylor's experience having an insulin allergy, Taylor's mother Gema Westwell said, "Straight after taking the injections he would go into a trance-like state, he was like a zombie, unable to communicate and function. We switched Taylor to an insulin pump hoping it would help, but then he started breaking out with painful red welts all over his body. It was

so upsetting because nothing we were trying to do was helping to take the pain away. These welts eventually turned into permanent areas of abnormally sunken skin, into which no insulin could be given." His symptoms worsened until the youngster was in constant pain and his parents had to check his sugar levels throughout the day and night to make sure he did not slip into unconsciousness.

Potential option

When he was seven, doctors discovered his allergy to insulin was only skin deep, and he was referred to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London (GOSH), which treats over 1,500 children from the Middle East every year. Dr Rakesh Amin, paediatric consultant in endocrinology at GOSH said, "Taylor's quality of life was so poor and his prognosis so bleak that to not find a solution to this allergy was not an option." After a number of ideas were explored, earlier this year Dr Amin identified a device that connects an insulin pump device to the abdominal cavity, so the drug bypasses the skin, as a potential option to treat Taylor's condition.

Last month, Taylor became the first child in the UK, and the fifth in the world, to be fitted with the device, GOSH said. "This case nicely illustrates, that although we help manage children with common diabetes, the GOSH Diabetes Service particularly specializes in rare



Taylor, aged 9

forms of diabetes or rare diabetes related complications. Our multidisciplinary team has unique skills sets and we try hard to find solutions using the latest technologies. We approach each child and young person as individuals, and aim to improve how each family is able to live with diabetes," Dr Amin explains.

Taylor's father Scott Banks concluded, "It's

still early days but we've already noticed the changes. Most importantly Taylor's blood sugar levels are significantly lower and much more balanced. He isn't in any pain, he hasn't had any reaction in his skin and he's sleeping better. For the first time Taylor identified on his own when he was having a hypo, which is just brilliant. This progression means everything to us.

We're so grateful to Dr Amin and GOSH and to all of the nurses and doctors who have helped Taylor. I just hope now that this will help him to have a chance at being a normal little boy, back in school and playing with his friends. He's missed out on so much because he's been so ill for so long, I hope this Dia Port will help Taylor get his childhood back."

Transgender women can breastfeed, study shows

MIAMI: The first scientific case study has been published describing how a US transgender woman was able to breastfeed her adopted infant by taking hormones that induce lactation. But experts say more research is needed to determine if the milk is nutritious and safe for babies. The report in the journal Transgender Health

describes a 30-year-old transgender woman who was born male and had been taking feminizing hormone therapy for six years. She had not undergone any genital or breast surgeries.

She sought medical advice because her partner was pregnant but was not interested in breastfeeding "and she hoped to take on the role of being the primary food source for her infant," said the report, led by researchers at Mount Sinai Icahn School of Medicine in New York. The patient followed a regimen previously shown to induce lactation in women, including increased estradiol and progesterone, and was told to use a breast pump for five minutes per breast three times a day.

She also obtained an anti-nausea drug called dom-

peridone from Canada that is used off-label to boost milk production. Domperidone is not approved in the United States, due to the US Food and Drug Administration's concern that it may lead to cardiac arrest-and its unknown risks to breastfeeding infants. "Three and a half months after she started the regimen, the baby was born," said the report. "The patient breastfed exclusively for six weeks," then began to supplement feedings with formula due to "concerns about insufficient milk volume."

The baby's growth and feeding habits were all normal, said the report. Experts say infants should be breastfed exclusively for the first year of life and longer if possible, due to the health benefits of mother's milk which far exceed formula. But it's too early to say whether the

transgender approach is safe and nutritious for infants, said Madeline Deutsch, clinical director of the University of California, San Francisco Center of Excellence for Transgender Health.

"I wouldn't do it," said Deutsch, herself a transgender woman and parent to a six-month old baby who is breastfed by Deutsch's wife, who was also the gestational carrier. "The number one concern for me would be the nutritional quality," she told AFP. Also, the hormones involved in inducing lactation can lead to mood swings and weight gain, which can be a deterrent for some people, she said. A bit more research could easily shed light on the nutritional quality of the breast milk, and the safety of the hormones needed to produce it. —AFP

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