

Support for parents

LOOKING at this cute little girl one would assume little Bridie Scarce is just like any other cheeky two-year-old, charming one minute and throwing a tantrum the next.

Bridie (pictured) was born with a giant melanocytic nevus, a large dark birthmark covering one third of her scalp and forehead.

Statistics suggest that this occurs in as few as one in 500,000 babies.

She had quite a few trips to the Royal Children's Hospital where the general opinion was to wait until Bridie was 8 or 9 years of age before performing a procedure called tissue expansion.

Having never heard of a nevus (or naevus), Bridie's parents Rachel and Darren decided to do a bit of research on the condition via the internet and through the help of the local library and a neighbor discovered the Aussie Nevus Support Group site.

"I cannot express the relief and emotion I felt when I first saw photos of other children, Australian children with this condition. Suddenly we weren't alone. We could talk to other parents who had gone through the same situations or who themselves had been floundering as to what to do; what was best for their child. Initially it was all quite overwhelming," Rachel said.

"You go through stages, what caused this, was it something I ate, why me, why us but when you see



some of the other children who are far worse off than you it immediately puts things into perspective.

"People, children can be cruel to anyone who is different, we just wanted to make life easier for our little girl so we asked as many questions as we could," Rachel said.

Bridie's condition had also received great media attention with 'Poppy's Story' on A Current Affair.

Poppy had a nevus covering her face and her story touched a lot of people.

So many that she and her family raised over \$200,000 in two weeks for a special laser for Westmead

Children's Hospital to enable her to receive better treatment.

Two of the parents involved in creating the Nevus Support Group decided to produce a brochure to raise awareness of this condition.

Darren and Rachel wanted to help and had a film fundraiser hoping to donate \$100 towards the brochure.

Through friends, family and complete strangers they raised \$700 which went a long way towards the brochure which also features Bridie on the front.

"People are just so

generous and caring, particularly where children are concerned. The response was amazing," Rachel said.

Bridie underwent surgery at Sydney's Westmead Hospital in November.

Skin was taken from her back and grafted to her forehead.

The nevus on her forehead was excised and the remaining area on her scalp will be removed in the future using the tissue expansion procedure.

"We are not looking forward to that but don't dwell on it — one step at a time. This skin graft was such a success, people don't look twice anymore. Little

Australian Nevus Support Group

Peer support for individuals and families affected by Congenital Melanocytic Naevus



A non-professional support group

To find out more or give support
Australian Nevus Support Group contact details
or phone 08 8291 2045 in South Australia

Poppy and her family visited us in Sydney as well as two other families we met through the group. We were able to come home earlier thanks to the wonderful care of Dr Ernan Hession and nurses at the clinic who changed Bridie's bandages daily, it's great to be in such good hands locally," Rachel said.

Bridie has recovered well and still has bandages and silicon applied nightly to reduce scarring.

"We have to be particularly vigilant with sunscreen and hats as Bridie has other nevi on her body and this will continue to develop," Rachel said.