



Leah standing tall after spine battle

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A YOUNG girl from Chester who was told her spine was crushing her to death has lived to tell her remarkable story.

Eleven-year-old Leah Roberts, of Lache Lane, a pupil of Overleigh St Mary's Primary School, was just four years old when she was diagnosed with scoliosis – a condition which causes the spine to excessively curve sideways.

The consultant explained no treatment was necessary at the time and it was not until she returned to hospital six years later that the severity of the condition was realised.

Leah and her family were given the devastating news that the untreated spinal curvature had rapidly worsened, twisting and contorting in the young girl's back.

Leah, aged 10 at the time, was informed that her condition was so severe that she would need to undergo a major 10-hour operation to avoid her spine crushing her internal organs.

The condition, which affects about four per cent of the population, isn't treated in the UK until the curve becomes so severe that the only option left is to have an "incredibly risky" operation.

The procedure involves metal rods being inserted either side of the spine, before the spine is fused solid.

Leah was put on the spinal fusion surgery waiting list and the family were left distraught.

Leah had been described as an "active and bubbly young girl", taking part in netball, tennis, rounders and lacrosse, with a particular passion for athletics.

However, the active youngster had to deal with the prospect of invasive surgery and not being able to compete in sport for 12-18 months.

Leah's mother, Dawn, said she struggled to watch her daughter experience such turmoil at such a "young and fragile" age.

Dawn said: "Seeing my daughter so frightened was horrendous, especially as I was just as anx-

ious. I felt backed into a corner, as I had been told that without surgery my daughter could die, yet the associated risks were also sky high."

Dawn desperately sought a second opinion, but was met with the same answer – surgery was the only treatment available.

As she explored the associated risks, Dawn was alarmed to hear paralysis, nerve damage, infection and even death were all possibilities.

Frantically, Dawn returned home and began to search the internet and discovered The Scoliosis SOS clinic.

Founded and run by Erika Maude, who has Scoliosis herself, the clinic opened five years ago and follows the ScolioGold method – a combination of non-surgical treatments.

The day after Leah's 11th birthday, and a week before her surgery date she started an intensive treatment course and in four weeks saw 'miraculous' improvements.

Her posture had improved and she cosmetically looked straighter, but her lung capacity and flexibility had also increased. The treatment meant that she could avoid spinal fusion surgery.

Dawn said: "The results my daughter gained are remarkable. Spinal fusion surgery is a serious operation which would have restricted Leah's physical capacity for the rest of her life. I am overjoyed that she has been able to avoid such invasive treatment."

She added: "I will be forever grateful to Scoliosis SOS for what they have done for my little girl."

Leah said: "I am so happy with the way my back looks. I almost looked wonky before and I felt everyone would stare at me, now I'm confident that I am standing much taller."

"The course was great fun and I made a whole load of new friends but I also learnt a lot too. I learnt how to treat my condition with my home exercise programme, which ensures the curvature won't get worse."



Leah Roberts who is battling scoliosis – a condition which causes the spine to excessively curve.