

Caitlin avoids surgery through spinal treatment

THIS is the little Southside girl that has avoided major spinal surgery for a severely debilitating condition by travelling to the UK for treatment.

by **Jamie Deasy**

Nine-year-old Caitlin Murphy from Rathmines, who suffers from scoliosis, was advised by a private clinic in Dublin that she would have to undergo major surgery and have metal rods inserted in her back to correct the condition.

Scoliosis is a curving of the spinal cord and can, in severe instances, cause diminished lung capacity, putting pressure on the heart.

The condition, which more commonly affects girls, often occurs at the start of adolescence.

In the cases of those who suffer from mild symptoms, it can sometimes correct itself as the child grows.

But in about 10 per cent of cases, the patients are often advised to wear a back brace to prevent further curvature.

The brace is continually worn while the child is still growing – until about 15 for girls and 17 for boys.

However, the degree of curvature of Caitlin's spine was high. Experts say that in about three out of every 1,000 cases of scoliosis, where the curve is greater than 50 degrees, damage to the heart, lungs and severe back pain can be a possibility.

Caitlin fitted this profile and her consultant suggested spinal fusion surgery. Using this technique, her spine would be straightened with metal growing

rods that would be changed as she grew older.

However, Caitlin's mother Sandra was told that her daughter could not have the surgery until she stopped growing. As Sandra became increasingly anxious about her daughter's case she conducted some research and found out about the SOS clinic in Suffolk, which is the only one to offer specialist treatment for the condition.

It claims that 88 per cent of patients who complete their course of exercise-based treatment are able to avoid spinal fusion surgery.

Speaking about attempts to get treatment for her daughter, Sandra said: "When Caitlin was first diagnosed we were all terrified. We did not know which way to turn.

"When I started to do my own research I realised that if we did not act quickly then Caitlin's scoliosis would continue to get worse.

"It was made very clear that if we left it any longer Caitlin would end up having her spine fused."

The family moved to the UK when Caitlin embarked on her treatment at Scoliosis SOS in February. Her mother says she hasn't looked back since.

"When she finished the treatment her appearance had improved and her pain had disappeared," Sandra added. "The exercises have strengthened the muscles surrounding her spine and have stopped her scoliosis from getting any worse."

Caitlin's treatment involves learning various types of exercises to strengthen the muscles surrounding the spine. Caitlin also learned about her condition and how she can prevent progression from occurring in the future.

She was also taught how to breathe into the collapsed areas of her lungs.

The ScolioGold treatment method practised at the UK clinic works by strengthening the muscles surrounding the spine – this brings the patient into a more central upright posture and prevents progression from occurring.

Caitlin was treated at the clinic by Joseph Head and David Andrew Black, who are both fully qualified physiotherapists.

Mr Head said: "The ScolioGold course is specifically designed to prevent a patient's scoliosis from progressing.

"If Caitlin had just gone with what was recommended in Ireland, which was to monitor her condition, she would have almost certainly ended up having spinal fusion surgery. Surgery has now been prevented and as long as Caitlin continues doing her exercises her scoliosis should remain in a stable state."



● Caitlin Murphy from Rathmines has avoided major spinal surgery thanks to work at a UK clinic.