

Missing hip fails to define young Australian man's life

At just 3-days old, Matt Ward was diagnosed with hip dysplasia in both hip joints; the left hip was completely dislocated. Also diagnosed with malignant hyperpyrexia, which can cause an allergic reaction to anaesthetics, the difficult decision was made, after 12 months of complications and treatments, that the best option was for Matt to have no further surgery. The process then began for Matt and his family to adjust to normal life, knowing that a hip replacement as a young adult was likely, as he could undergo this procedure with an epidural.

Hip dysplasia, also known as developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH) is a common condition which occurs when the ball and socket of the hip do not fit together in their 'normal' position. Sometimes this is due to abnormal development and/or lack of growth of the hip joint. It can result in months – and in some cases years – of medical treatment.

Growing up, there weren't many sports or activities Matt was able to do on a regular basis, as he had trouble running, jumping, and even standing for extended periods of time - but at the age of twelve, he found swimming.

Matt said - "My swimming took off from there, and to this day I'm grateful to have achieved many things, from breaking the open Australian Record for the 50m Breaststroke in my classification; to swimming the fastest time in the world for the 2014 period, in the SC 50m & 100m Breaststroke for my classification."

Now based in Melbourne to pursue his swimming goals, outside of the pool, Matt, now in his early twenties and with one hip almost completely degenerated, still has pain and trouble walking, and is kept awake some nights because of it. But in the pool, he can push past all that. "For me what's been most valuable in my own journey, aside from being blessed with these achievements, has been meeting so many amazing people and Paralympians, each with their own inspiring journeys", says Matt.

Early diagnosis optimises the best outcome for hip dysplasia treatment, but sometimes, due to unforeseen circumstances, things don't always go to plan. "Sometimes in life things just happen, and for me personally, I've tried to not get into the mindset of being disabled or limited in any way, instead just seeing where it all takes me. I've swum with amazing people; had the opportunity to compete at the Olympic Trials in April 2016; been able to travel to many places all over Australia for competitions - and to be frank, I wouldn't change a thing" says Matt.

Matt is an ambassador for Healthy Hips Australia, whose second annual Healthy Hips Week runs from 23-29 April 2017. During this week, parents and parents-to-be are being asked to educate themselves about the risk factors for hip dysplasia and ensure their children's hips are checked regularly across their early years of life. For more information about hip dysplasia visit: www.healthyhipsaustralia.org.au

MEDIA CONTACT

For further information and interview opportunities with Matt Ward, Healthy Hips Australia Chairperson, Sarah Twomey, or other families with children affected by hip dysplasia, please contact Sarah:

info@healthyhipsaustralia.org.au

FURTHER INFORMATION

Healthy Hips Week 23-29 April 2017: <http://www.healthyhipsaustralia.org.au/healthy-hips-week/>