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Alabama Toddler Recovering after Undergoing Lifesaving Brain Surgery in Phoenix

Neurosurgeons at Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix have successfully removed a rare and complex brain lesion from a two-year-old Alabama girl, after her family consulted with multiple neurosurgeons who considered the lesion too risky to remove at her young age.

Abigail Battles is now a very active and fully functioning little girl, in Ashville, Alabama.

"Had Abigail not been successfully treated at Barrow, she likely would have died within a matter of months," says her mother, Amanda Battles.

Abigail's parents first noticed symptoms in January when Abigail started to tire easily, her heart beat became irregular and she began to have mild seizures and strokes. Her parents took her to their local Emergency Department which detected a spot on her brain through a CT scan. Abigail was referred to a hospital in Birmingham where doctors diagnosed a very large and complex arteriovenous malformation (AVM), a rare neurological disorder that causes abnormal tangles of arteries and veins in the brain. Because the surgery to remove this complex AVM carries a high risk in small children, physicians recommended they wait until Abigail is at least seven years of age to remove the lesion.

Soon after her diagnosis, Abigail's health began to decline. After consulting with neurosurgeons in Boston who recommended the same treatment plan, her mom turned to the Internet where she found an AVM survivors website. **Through the website, Battles learned of and contacted Robert Spetzler, MD, world-renowned neurosurgeon and director of Barrow. Barrow's neurosurgeons are experts for treating difficult AVMs and because of their significant experience, the team at Barrow could offer Abigail treatment.**

Once at Barrow, doctors determined that Abigail's AVM needed to be treated because the flow of blood into the AVM was causing her heart to fail. Without surgery, she would have one to three years to live. She underwent a minimally-invasive procedure by Felipe Albuquerque, MD, Barrow neurosurgeon, to glue shut approximately 50 percent of the AVM. Because of the complexity of her AVM, Abigail would need a craniotomy two days later to remove the remaining portion. The day before her craniotomy, Abigail's heart condition suddenly worsened. The high blood flow from the AVM was causing her to go into heart failure. Without surgery to remove the AVM, her heart would give out in a matter of months. **The next day, Barrow neurosurgeons, Dr. Spetzler, and Ruth Bristol, MD, completely obliterated Abigail's AVM eliminating her risk of death and providing an opportunity to live a full life.**

"Before we turned to Barrow, we had consulted with four neurosurgeons who told us to do nothing," says Battles. "Had we would have listened to them, we never would have found Barrow and Abigail might not have survived. God had his hand in leading us to the right place for treatment."

"Abigail's AVM was life threatening and extremely complex," says Dr. Spetzler. "Its size and very large blood flow put her brain and heart at significant risk. Because our team at Barrow has treated so many difficult AVMs from around the world, we thought that treatment was indicated due to Abigail's deteriorating course and the very high risk of not doing anything. I am delighted with her outcome and expect her to do very well."