

A Podiatric Challenge...One Foot at a Time

Dr. Kenneth Leavitt, Chief of Podiatry at NEBH, rarely backs down from a challenge. And Eugert Kaziu certainly presented him with one.

Eugert, known as Gerti to friends and family, was born in Albania with severely turned feet, a condition that has steadily worsened as he has gotten older. By the time he was 18, his feet turned so badly that he had difficulty walking or even standing straight. His family knew that the problem would likely get much worse as he grew but their access to a foot surgeon trained to perform the kind of surgeries that Gerti would need was severely limited in Albania. In addition, the boy's case had other complications because Gerti has mild autism as well as several other medical issues, some of them neurological.

In the summer of 2009, Gerti's sister, Jetmira, an Albanian émigré living with her husband in Boston, approached Dr. Leavitt and asked if he would be willing to assemble a team to help her brother. Intrigued, Dr. Leavitt went to Albania in September to assess the situation and meet Gerti. Because of the complexity of the operation, it was determined that he would perform the surgeries on the first foot in the United States at NEBH and then travel to Albania in May 2010, if things went well, to follow up and operate on the second foot. During his visit, he wanted to ensure both that the patient was medically stable and that the operating conditions would be sufficient to perform the second operation.

While in Albania, he met with

Edvin Selmani, MD, an Albanian physician pursuing his foot fellowship. The two agreed that Dr. Selmani would fly to Massachusetts to observe the first surgery, then, when Dr. Leavitt went to Albania in May to operate on the other foot, Dr. Selmani would be his assistant, organizer and part of the translation team.

So, in November, Gerti and his family finally arrived in Massachusetts for the first surgery. The team assembled by Dr. Leavitt included Dr. Selmani, Dr. Brian Zinsmeister, NEBH staff podiatrist and Dr. Bob Bode from Anesthesia, all of whom had graciously donated their

dad, and me and my husband, that my brother's situation can be used to help not only the care of his other foot, but other children in Albania." Jetmira also notes that she is grateful to all of Gerti's caregivers at NEBH. Following the surgery, she sent a letter to one of the nurses at NEBH, stating, "I want to thank you again for the love that you personally and that others at the Hospital have shown to my brother and our family." ■



Clockwise from top left: Gerti required seven pins in his foot to straighten it out; Dr. Leavitt with Gerti; pre-op, Gerti's left foot was severely turned; post-op, the foot has been straightened.

time to Gerti's case. Four hours, multiple incisions and seven screws later, Gerti's left foot had been straightened. From there, the boy experienced three months of intense physical therapy to teach him how to walk again, before he was able to return to Albania this month.

In May, Dr. Leavitt plans to return to Albania to the University Hospital "Mother Theresa" in Tirana, Albania to operate on Gerti's other foot and to help them expand their Department of Orthopedics.

In the meantime, Jetmira has mounted a publicity campaign and started a foundation to help fund more care for disabled patients like her brother and to bring talented surgeons like Dr. Leavitt to Albania to teach local surgeons the advanced techniques needed to care for them. "It is the hope of my mum and

CME Program Re-Accredited

The combined Library & CME (Continuing Medical Education) Departments are pleased to announce that the CME program at NEBH has been awarded "Accreditation with Commendation" by the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). This is the highest rating a CME provider can achieve.

This level of certification is awarded a six year accreditation term, instead of the usual four years. The new term began in 2010. It is exclusively reserved for CME programs that "exceed ACCME expectations" and is a first in the history of NEBH. Besides us, only three other medical institutions in Massachusetts have been awarded this distinction since June 2009.

The reaccreditation process was a year-long effort on the part of the Library/CME staff: Dr. Frank Coco, Director of Medical Education; Olga Lyczmanenko, Library Director/CME Coordinator; and Christopher Vaillancourt, Librarian/CME Assistant. It entailed reviewing over 300 educational programs, writing a 200-page self study report, and attending a review interview with surveyors.

The reaccreditation decision is a testament to the quality and exacting standards of the CME program at New England Baptist Hospital and to the dedicated Hospital-wide support, guidance, and expertise provided by the CME Committee, program faculty, and clinical staff. ■

For those wishing to donate funds and equipment to the orthopedic division of the Hospital where Dr. Leavitt will be operating this coming May, tax deductible donations can be made care of "Gerti" at:

160 Commonwealth Avenue, #419
Boston, MA 02116

Or on the web at <http://www.maasbesa.org> or <http://maasbesa.org/donate.php>

MAAS/BESA is an independent, not-for-profit organization under section 501(c)3 of the IRS tax code.