

NEWS

Groundbreaking stem cell treatment key to Cairns boy's transformation

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Flynn Rigby, 11, with his mother Jenni at their home in Trinity Park. Parents Jenni and Frazer are raising \$30,000 to take Flynn to Thailand for a second round of stem cell treatment after a very successful first course in China in 2011. *Source: News Corp Australia*

A CAIRNS boy who learnt to talk, read, swim and cycle after revolutionary stem cell treatment in China will head to Thailand in June for a second round of the life-changing cells.

Fundraising efforts have already begun for Flynn Rigby, 11, who finally learnt to talk at the age of eight and melted his parents' hearts when he was able to say "I love you".

“It’s a significant medical miracle and to us it’s help from God,” says Frazer Rigby of his son’s transformation since receiving eight courses of stem cells during a 37-day stay in Qingdao in 2011.

Flynn weighed just 720 grams when he and twin brother Jack were born 16 weeks early and given a 10-15 per cent chance of survival.

Jack passed away and Flynn spent his first 112 days in hospital with significant brain injury and chronic lung disease.

Later diagnosed with autism, he received intensive therapy for six years before the breakthrough trip to China.

“It has been totally life-changing for Flynn and for our whole family,” said his mother, Jenni Rigby, “and we would never have been able to access this treatment without the generosity of everyone who supported us in our last fundraising drive.”

Before China, Flynn could only sound out individual letters in the alphabet. Even words like cat and dog were beyond him.

But on his return home, he greeted his mother with the words “happy home mummy” and has since mastered hundreds of words, uses sentences, reads books, writes his name and mixes well with others.

“It’s still so wonderful to hear him chat away to everyone he meets,” Jenni said.

He can now swim freestyle, dress himself with minimal assistance and recently learnt to ride a new bike — without training wheels — in four days.

“Special moments for us have been when he’s been able to say, for the first time, ‘happy birthday mum’ or ‘happy birthday dad’ or ‘I love you mum’ or ‘I love you dad’, Frazer said.

The Rigbys said the new round of treatment would allow further regeneration of Flynn’s brain to improve his speech, comprehension, maths, motor skills and independence.

To help the Rigbys reach their \$30,000 target, email rigby.frazer@bigpond.com, follow Team Flynn Support Page on Facebook or visit www.developingfoundation.org.au/family/flynn online.

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.