

## Wexford girl walks again after US treatment

Monday, 15 December 2008

A Co Wexford girl, who was told by doctors she would never walk again, walked into Dublin Airport this morning following six months' treatment in New York.

10-year-old Nicole Cahill, from Marshalstown outside Enniscorthy, lost the ability to walk after a viral infection caused brain inflammation and a stroke.

During the early part of her illness she spent 24 days in a coma, and doctors said that if she ever woke up, she would probably be in a vegetative state for the rest of her life.

However, after 12 months in hospital and the National Rehabilitation Centre in Dún Laoghaire, Nicole returned home but her mobility remained extremely impaired.

Her family said that because they were not able to access the appropriate intensity of treatment for her, her mobility did not improve.

Nicole's aunt, who lives in New York, later arranged for her to meet an orthopaedic surgeon at a New York hospital who said he could help.

Nicole travelled to the US and underwent surgery six months ago.

She returned to Dublin Airport this morning, where there was an emotional welcome from members of her family and friends in the arrivals hall.

The treatment has cost the family more than €200,000 so far, much of which has been raised by well-wishers in Wexford.

This morning, Nicole said it was really good to be home and that it was great to be able to walk again. Her parents, Bill and Mairead, thanked all those who helped to get Nicole to where she is.

However, they were critical of the Irish health service, which they said was unable to provide the services necessary for Nicole to walk again.

They said their daughter had been 'blown off' by the health services here, forcing them to take their own steps to help her.

Nicole will need ongoing physiotherapy for some time but her family says she has only been offered one session a week by the Health Service Executive. They will be forced to pay for the other four days a week themselves.

A large party is planned for Nicole in Marshalstown on her return later today.

