My Child Has Cerebral Palsy

Terminology: It’s Not a Different Language!

Neuroimaging – images produced of either the structure of the brain or the activity of the brain or nervous system

MRI – magnetic resonance imaging – uses magnetic field and radio waves to bounce off of internal structures to create a detailed image of organ or tissue

CAT scan – an X-ray image made using computerized axial tomography – the computer controls the motion of X-ray sources and detectors to create a detailed image of organ or tissue. Also known as CT scan.

Ultrasound – uses sound vibrations at an ultrasonic frequency to bounce off of internal structures to create a detailed image of organ or tissue

Non-progressive syndrome – the syndrome does not worsen as time goes on

Pathology – the science of the causes and effects of diseases

Pathogenesis – the manner of development of a disease

Epidemiology – the branch of medicine that deals with the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases

Etiology – the cause or set of causes of a disease or condition

Encephalopathy - a disease in which the functioning of the brain is affected

Hemorrhage – an escape of blood from a ruptured blood vessel

Physiotherapy – another term for physical therapy – treatment through physical methods

Occupational Therapy – treatment through performance of activities of daily living

Speech Therapy – training that helps people with speech and language problems – working with the muscles of speaking

Orthotics – branch of medicine dealing with artificial devices that aid in movement

Pharmacological – dealing with the branch of medicine concerned with the study of drug action

Neurosurgery – surgery performed on the nervous system – mainly the brain or spinal cord, but can include the peripheral nervous system as well

Orthopaedic/orthopedic surgery – a branch of surgery concerned with conditions involving the musculoskeletal system (muscles and bones together)

Periventricular leukomalacia – type of brain injury that involves the death of small areas of brain tissue around fluid-filled areas of the brain known as ventricles

Metabolic acidosis – too much acid in body fluids, can lead to brain damage

Coagulation disorders – also known as coagulopathy – condition in which the blood’s ability to clot is impaired – can cause excessive or prolonged bleeding

Acute – present or experienced to a severe/intense degree

Extrapyramidal – relating to nerves concerned with motor activity that descend from the brain’s cortex to the spine
Cerebral – referring to the cerebrum of the brain. This is the main portion of the brain. It excludes the midbrain and brainstem.

Cortical – referring to the cortex of the brain. This is the matter that makes up the entire outer portion of the brain.

Neuron – the cells that make up the brain and relay information throughout the brain and to and from the rest of the body.

Gray Matter – the parts of the brain that contain the cell bodies of the neurons. This is the “processing center” of the cells.

White Matter – the parts of the brain that contain the axons of the neurons. This is the long “tail” of the cell that passes the impulse from one area to the next.

Cortical Motor Area – this is the part of the brain that houses the motor neurons. It is located in the cortex, near the surface of the brain. There are several motor areas throughout the brain.

Corticospinal Tracts – these are the pathways that impulses follow from the brain out to the rest of the body. They are made up of several neurons connecting end to end to pass the impulse on.

Central Nervous System (CNS) – includes the brain and the spinal cord.

Peripheral Nervous System (PNS) – includes the nerves and nervous structures outside of the brain and spinal cord.

Lesion – any region in an organ that has suffered damage. This can be damage from injury or from disease.

Ischemia – this is lack of blood supply to an organ or part of the body, leading to damage to that tissue.

Hypoxia – this is a deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching tissues. This is one of the common causes of brain damage in infants.

Brain Asphyxia – the condition that arises when the brain is deprived of oxygen, causing death to tissue.

Prenatal – before birth; during or related to pregnancy.

Perinatal – immediately before or after birth.

Postnatal – after childbirth.

Neonatal – relating to a newborn child.

Congenital – present from birth.

Genetic – passed on through genes – inherited.

Spasticity – stiff or rigid muscles or unusual tightness or increased muscle tone. Reflexes are stronger or exaggerated.

Ataxia – the loss of full control of bodily movements.

Chorea – jerky involuntary movements.

Athetosis – abnormal muscle contractions cause involuntary writhing movements.

Choreoathetosis – involuntary movements that combine chorea and athetosis.

Dystonia – abnormal muscle tone (tension) that leads to muscle spasms and abnormal posture.

Musculoskeletal – relating to the muscles and bones together.

Gait – a person’s manner of walking.

Passive Movement/Passive Range of Motion – this is referring to a movement done by the therapist/evaluator without the muscles contracting – the range at which the assessor can move a joint.

Active Movement/Active Range of Motion – movement done entirely by a patient’s muscles – the range at which an individual can actively move a joint.

Stretch Reflex – muscle contraction in response to stretching a muscle. It is a natural reflex that occurs subconsciously when fibers in the muscle detect a stretch.

Neuromuscular – relating to both the nerves and the muscles.

Diplegia – paralysis of same parts on both sides of the body – typically affects the legs more severely than the arms.

Hemiplegia – paralysis of a part on one side of the body and not the other.

Quadriplegia – paralysis of all four limbs, also known as tetraplegia.

Bilateral – affecting both sides.