

Hope for children born with club feet

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A new kind of club foot treatment has been introduced here, giving hope to children who are born with this deformity.

A workshop on the treatment of congenital club foot using the Ponseti Method was held last week at the Physiotherapy Unit at the Seychelles Hospital.

Organised by Steps Charity, a charity organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa which supports babies and children with club foot in Southern Africa, the workshop was attended by all physiotherapists, fabricators of artificial feet and orthopedics in Seychelles.

The founder and director of the organisation, Karen Moss, said Ponseti is actually the best method to treat club foot.

The Ponseti method is a manipulative technique that corrects congenital club foot without invasive surgery. It was developed by Dr Ignacio V. Ponseti of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, USA in the 1950s, and was repopularised in 2000 by Dr John Herzenberg in the USA and Europe and in Africa by NHS surgeon Steve Mannion.

Ms Moss noted that the old treatment involved a lot of surgery which has side effects such as scar tissues and stiff feet.

With the old treatment, there have been cases where the foot has been amputated as a result of multiple surgeries, noted Ms Moss.

"This (Ponseti) treatment is over 95% successful. The child's foot is then encased in special shoes where the foot is back to normal in six weeks," she said.

Ms Moss suggested this method of treatment when she came to Seychelles last year, although there are not many such cases here.

According to senior physiotherapist Wahida Payet only two in every 1000 babies are born with this deformity here.



“Even if Seychelles has a small population, those few kids who suffer from club foot should also have the same opportunities and abilities as every child,” said Ms Moss.

Steps Charity has already done training in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana and Seychelles is the fourth country where this training is being held.

“We get two club foot sufferers in each 1000 children born here and there are some very severe cases. As we wanted to get rid of foot deformities in Seychelles we discovered that we needed such skills as we want the children to grow up and live normal lives without deformed feet. We have already received some training through visiting specialists but we lacked the necessary skills.

So there was a need to get a properly detailed and organised workshop. And when the founder of Steps Charity visited the hospital, things were set in motion and hence the workshop to upgrade our skills in that field,” said Ms Payet.

Club foot is one of the most common congenital deformities where about one in every 1000 children worldwide is born with it. A normal developing foot turns into a club foot around the third month of foetal life. Fibrosis, a pathological increase of connective tissue, seems to be the main reason leading to the deformity.