

The Miracle in Room 17

A Level 1 trauma center. A top-rated children's hospital, with world-renowned experts. Treating the sickest, most vulnerable members of our community.

As you read list after list of Inova's accolades, it's easy to forget that these are not abstract ideas. These are the lives of people, families, and children. Meet Andrew – or, as he is known at Inova, the miracle in room 17.



Andrew is a nine-year-old boy who was diagnosed at the age of three with portal hypertension, a rare condition in which the portal vein becomes blocked or constricted. The portal vein is responsible for carrying blood to the

liver in order for it to be processed before returning to the heart. If blood cannot travel freely through the portal vein, pressure builds up there as well as in the surrounding blood vessels. With every pump of Andrew's heart, those blood vessels were under immense stress. And one day, one of them ruptured.

On July 7, Andrew began to show signs of internal bleeding, and his parents rushed him to the emergency room. Andrew was then transferred to a hospital, where he underwent a series of endoscopic procedures to control the bleeding.

But on July 23, less than a week after Andrew had returned home with his family, he collapsed. He was transported by ambulance to the pediatric emergency department at Inova Children's Hospital in Fairfax, the only pediatric level 1 trauma center in the region. "The minute we arrived at the emergency department, we knew we were in the right place," said Andrew's mother, Karen. "Awaiting our arrival

was a team of emergency physicians, pediatric specialists, and emergency nurses ready to diagnose and treat our son."

Dozens of people worked as one that day as Andrew was evaluated and whisked into operating room 17. Inova's multidisciplinary team approach was critical in Andrew's case. The blood vessels had ruptured so severely, and Andrew was bleeding so profusely, that a delay of seconds would have resulted in his death. Yet one wrong move could also have cost him his life. "There wasn't a 'right way' to do this," said Ian Leibowitz, MD, Andrew's gastroenterologist and the medical director of Inova Children's Digestive Disease Program.

Acting swiftly and decisively, pediatric transplant surgeon James Piper, MD, took the lead and opened Andrew's abdomen, which allowed the team to give him oxygen, find the source of bleeding, and stop it. Once Andrew was stabilized, Dr. Piper installed a shunt to give the body a new, easier pathway to the liver, bypassing the portal vein and curing Andrew's condition. After a 12-day hospital stay, Andrew went home with his family to continue his recovery.

Andrew has recently been back to the hospital, but not for the reason you'd think. He and his parents welcomed a newborn baby sister in October.

For Andrew's parents, words can't express "how enormously grateful we are to everyone at Inova who helped bring back our precious child." Andrew's bright smile shows what a list of Inova's honors and awards never could – how the men and women of Inova care for our community.