Title: Transitional Care in Neurosurgery: Follow up from a 12 Month Experience

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Background: Transition of care from pediatric to adult care is an important and timely challenge in Spina Bifida (SB). We recognized that the needs of patients who were transitioning were being insufficiently met. We therefore developed a paradigm for pediatric neurosurgical coverage in an already existing adult spina bifida clinic and report here our initial twelve months experience.

Methods: Our previous review of the transition process confirmed that we were not successfully transitioning patients to adult care. Successful transition was defined as attendance of follow up visits, appropriate interaction with adult providers, and patient satisfaction.

Results: In October of 2010 we established the Adult Spina Bifida Clinic at UAB. The medical director of the pediatric spina bifida clinic agreed to participate in the adult clinic allowing for better continuity of neurosurgical care and institutional memory that enhanced the adult neurosurgeons ability to facilitate appropriate neurosurgical intervention. Since establishing the adult care clinic 60 adult patients have been seen, reviewed and evaluated. Four adult patients required further evaluation for signs of tethered spinal cord (TSC) and one went on to surgical detethering. Only 2 patients showed signs of shunt failure and only one of these went on to require shunt revision. Patient satisfaction with the transition experience was improved and transition was markedly facilitated. Resistance to depart the pediatric environment dissipated with assurance of ongoing competent care.

Conclusion: Multiple models of successful transition exist. Neurosurgery needs are often most challenging because of the potential acuity and severity of shunt problems and a paucity of adult providers experienced in the nuances of care for patients with SB. The described model has worked well but will be contrasted with other described paradigms from other centers. Acute need for care appears reduced in the adult population followed to date.