

QUALITY MEANS

an amazing race for three-year-old
Anthony D'Amato and his big brother

Anthony, 3, races remote controlled cars with his brother, Andrew, 5.



The sound of two brothers racing REMOTE CONTROLLED CARS

throughout the house is new for the D'Amato household. Just ask their parents, Andrew, Sr. and Kathleen. They'll tell you that as most parents happily keep journals marking their baby's "firsts," the D'Amatos sadly kept a journal marking Anthony's seizure activity. From the time he was six-months old, baby Anthony suffered epileptic seizures four to six times a day. When he wasn't having a seizure he spent hours recuperating afterward. No matter how much they held Anthony, no matter how much they fed him, he would cry out in agony.

Anthony's parents felt deep anguish as they watched their little boy get progressively worse. They lost all hope in the medications and the physicians who treated their boy and searched for a way to give Anthony a better life. They found it on May 27, 2004 when they arrived at The Neuroscience Institute at Hackensack University Medical Center.

Anthony was little more than 2 1/2 years of age and had significant delays in both cognitive and adaptive behavior skills, functioning approximately 10 to 12 months below his chronological age when he met with Arno Fried, M.D., FACS, chairman of The Department of Neurosurgery and director of The Pediatric Neuroscience Institute at HUMC; Catherine A. Mazzola, M.D., a pediatric neurosurgeon at Hackensack University Medical Center, and Marcelo Lancman, M.D., chief epileptologist of The Pediatric Neuroscience Institute. It was the recommendation of this highly skilled multidisciplinary team of specialists to have Anthony undergo brain surgery, a modified or partial hemispherectomy, to control his seizures. This is the surgical removal of nearly half of the brain.

"We knew the brain surgery was very dangerous, but we wanted the best for Anthony. We felt this was his only chance at developing and having any sort of a 'normal' life," said Anthony's dad.

On July 22, 2004, Kathleen and Andrew knew they made the right decision when Dr. Fried walked out of the operating room with a "big smile." The surgery went beautifully without complication and Anthony began his first day as a little boy who no longer suffers epileptic seizures.

The D'Amato family now happily marks Anthony's "firsts" – sharing power wheel vehicle rides with his brother Andrew, climbing jungle gyms, developmental gains, getting on a school bus, positive school progress reports, etc.

"Today he's beyond his terrible twos. He runs like a demon. He tears the place up! He's just a monster - which I'll take any day!" said his very elated father.



“At Hackensack University Medical Center quality means more than just maintaining a degree of excellence – it means constantly changing the way we think and act in order to go above and beyond the standard definition.”

PEDIATRIC NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE

- Includes an epilepsy monitoring unit, head trauma unit, and programs for cranio-facial reconstruction, neuro-oncology, and cerebral palsy and spasticity.
- A comprehensive brain tumor program.
- The only fully certified Level 4 Epilepsy Center and Epilepsy Surgery Center in the state of New Jersey.
- Team consists of two full-time pediatric neurosurgeons, pediatric neurologists, epileptologists, nurses, a neuropsychologist, music therapist, social worker, and a technical director who supervises the EEG technologists.
- Our team is best prepared to diagnose and manage children with all varieties of neurological disorders. Through the institute, children are provided detailed evaluation and examination, ensuring accurate diagnosis and treatment. Radiological studies, such as computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging or single photon emission computed tomography, or positron emission tomography scans may be ordered. EEGs may also be performed. Conditions treated by pediatric neurologists include: cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, encephalopathies, vascular disorders, movement disorders, peripheral neuropathies, degenerative disorders, cranial nerve disorders, brain and spinal cord injuries, headaches including migraine, congenital malformations (birth defects), chromosomal and metabolic abnormalities, dysraphism/spina bifida (spinal cord malformation), neuromuscular disorders (muscular dystrophy, spasticity, etc.), neurocutaneous syndromes (neurofibromatosis, tuberous sclerosis, etc.), and epilepsy (seizure disorders). We provide neurosurgical capabilities that are among the most advanced in the country.