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World-first research project to have kids running to better health

A landmark research project funded by Children's Hospital Foundation is aiming to improve the cardiovascular health for young children living with cerebral palsy (CP) consequently reducing the risk of health complications in adulthood.

Through the introduction of a brand-new discipline of athletics – frame running – participants of the project 'Running for Health' will use a frame that allows children with moderate to severe CP the capability to run.

Children with CP often have difficulty walking or cannot walk, leading to low physical activity levels. This leads to a 300 per cent increased risk of dying from cardiovascular disease compared to the rest of the population.

Led by Dr Sarah Reedman, research fellow at the University of Queensland, the study is the first of its kind internationally to host a randomised trial of frame running training and will monitor the improvements of cardiovascular fitness for young children living with CP as they train and grow.

"Kids with cerebral palsy grow up to be adults with cerebral palsy, and adults with the condition have a high risk of dying prematurely. The risk of this cohort dying from these conditions hasn't decreased in 30 years, due to the lack of research into the area and I am hoping to change that," Dr Reedman said.

"Frame running is a very new sport and will only be introduced for the first time at the Paris Paralympics in 2024. We are currently identifying young people who want to get into the sport, improve their cardiovascular abilities, and you never know – they might end up representing Australia in their hometown come 2032!" she added.

The project could have the added benefit to improve sport equity, as frame running is one of the only accessible opportunities for high intensity activity for people with a severe disability. Other options include swimming – which can pose further dangers to this cohort of people – or bodyweight supported treadmill training, which proves a large financial burden.

Dr Reedman's research project received almost \$50,000 of funding from the Foundation and sits underneath the Queensland Cerebral Palsy and Rehabilitation Research Centre (QCPRRRC) which receives significant funding support from the Foundation.

Collaborating institutes include The University of Queensland, Queensland Children's Hospital (Queensland Paediatric Rehabilitation Service), Sydney Children's Hospital Network, and University of Sydney, with research sites in Brisbane and Cairns.

October 06 is World CP Day.

To help Children's Hospital Foundation fund further research, visit www.childrens.org.au.

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Media contact:

Lucinda Bayly, Media & Communications Manager at Children's Hospital Foundation
P: 3606 6135 OR 0439 003 022 | E: lucinda.bayly@childrens.org.au OR media@childrens.org.au

About the Children's Hospital Foundation

The Children's Hospital Foundation works wonders for sick and injured kids by funding vital research, new equipment, and providing entertainment and support for children and their families in hospital. We are committed to making a difference in the fight against childhood illness and injury so every child can grow up as happy and healthy as possible. For more about the Children's Hospital Foundation, visit www.childrens.org.au

A PO Box 8009
Woolloongabba QLD 4102
E info@childrens.org.au

P 1300 742 554
W www.childrens.org.au
ABN 11 607 902 687