

Gentle touch to fight a killer

By CARMELO AMALFI

GENTLE electric currents to the brain are helping 20-month-old Aaron Camm, of Karawara, beat a rare disease which painful conventional medicine has failed to cure.

Aaron's disability, arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, strikes about one baby a year in WA. Some die before they turn four, or are paralysed for life.

The disease is believed to be caused by a virus which enters the spinal cord via the mother's uterus during pregnancy.

It caused Aaron to be born with club feet, a stiff spine and joints, dislocated hips, hand disabilities and with muscles in his limbs either very weak or missing.

Doctors at Princess Margaret Hospital tried to correct the stiffness and shape of Aaron's spine and limbs by continually plastering his limbs and harnessing his hips back into shape.

"This treatment was very painful and stressful for us," Aaron's parents, Fiona and Ian, said yesterday.

They decided in June to take Aaron to Victor Zenni, a Polish physiotherapist who ran a Warsaw physiotherapy clinic for 13 years before martial law prompted him to flee to Australia in 1982.

Aaron has received four treatments. Long, gentle currents were passed through his brain through electrodes attached either to his forehead and the nape of his neck or the top of his head and lower back — while he was asleep.

"We owe a lot to PMH but Mr Zenni's treatment seems to have accelerated the rate of Aaron's improvement," Fiona said.

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