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New Zealand provides hope for better cerebral palsy outcomes

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Work to bring forward cerebral palsy diagnoses in babies has had a boost with $200k funding from CP Australia



A pair of researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand has led a successful bid to trial regional hubs for diagnosing cerebral palsy.

One in 500 babies is born with cerebral palsy yet, in Aotearoa New Zealand, children are not diagnosed until they are an average of 19 months old, something the researchers want to change.

In a new paper, researchers show that neuroimaging is commonly used with very preterm and term babies, but not with moderate-to-late preterm babies. In addition, neuroimaging didn't always detect cerebral palsy in babies that were later found to have the condition, suggesting other tools such asgeneral movements assessment (GMs) and Hammersmith Infant Neurological Examination (HINE) should be used more routinely.

The researchers are now working with clinicians based at Starship Children's Health and around the country to translate research into everyday practice. They were part of a successful funding bid to the CP Alliance Research Foundation (Australia) for $200k to support a pilot of an 'early diagnosis hub' for cerebral palsy in the Wellington region and a further $200k to support research in this area.

If the trial is successful, the goal is for these hubs to be established around New Zealand.