Matthew Williams (21) suffers with a catastrophic form of epilepsy called ‘Dravet Syndrome’ and his seizures started when he was 9 months old. Emma, his mother, asked if Matthew could try the Ketogenic Diet when he was 2 years old, but she was told the diet didn’t work. So she battled on, trying innumerable medications which didn’t help Matthews’ seizures and which caused devastating side effects. Six years later, Professor Helen Cross began a research trial of the Ketogenic Diet at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). Matthew and 144 other children with severe epilepsy were enrolled on the trial. Within 2 weeks of starting the diet Matthew’s seizures had reduced by 90% and within 8 months he was off all medication. Sadly for Matthew, the damage had been done. Years of seizures had caused terrible brain damage, his family had broken apart and Emma was now a single mum to Matthew and his younger sister Alice. Inspired by Matthew, she set up Matthew’s Friends in 2004 to provide information, education, training, resources and support for other families. The charity, which was started at Emma’s kitchen table, grew at a phenomenal rate and in 2011 they opened their own Ketogenic Therapies Clinic, employing an expert medical team to provide the therapy and train other clinical teams. Again, a non-profit making clinic that treats patients where there is no NHS provision, so that no family can be denied access to treatment as Emma was with Matthew. The clinic is also pioneering ketogenic therapies in other applications and is supporting clinical research in these new areas. Emma is not only the Founder/Chief Executive of the Matthew’s Friends Charity and Director of the Matthew’s Friends Clinics, she also Chairs Matthew’s Friends Glut 1 UK and is Chair of the Dravet Syndrome UK Foundation, she acts as an International Patron for Desi (Diets for Epilepsy in India) and is also the only non-medical member of 12 clinicians which make up the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) Global Task Force for Dietary Treatments for Epilepsy. In 2013 she was honoured with an MBE from HM the Queen for services to children with epilepsy.
Matthew’s Friends Today

Matthew’s Friends has a distinguished medical board, chaired by Professor Helen Cross, the Prince of Wales’s Chair of Childhood Epilepsy. It invests considerable funds for clinical research into Ketogenic Diet therapy and its applications, as well as training and educational programmes. It is providing funding for numerous NHS centres around the UK and 2011 saw the registration of Matthew’s Friends New Zealand and 2014 saw the registration of Matthew’s Friends Canada, as well as being involved with over 20 other countries worldwide in supporting the use of ketogenic dietary therapies. The charity has expanded its remit to help adults that are failing anti-epileptic medication and is also now working in the field of certain types of brain cancer and ketogenic dietary therapies. The contribution that Matthew’s Friends makes towards making these diets more widely available and ensuring it is properly supported is internationally recognised by both parents and medical professionals. 2016 sees them launch their ‘Matthew’s Friends KetoCollege’ which is a training programme to teach medical teams from around the world how to manage ketogenic therapies so as to best serve their patients.

What the Charity Provides

A comprehensive website covering all aspects of ketogenic dietary therapies.

Funding for NHS ketogenic centres around the UK to provide support to families.

A telephone support line which is available to families 365 days a year.

National and International workshops and conferences for both patients and healthcare professionals.

A global network of healthcare professionals and patient organisations who specialise in ketogenic dietary therapies.

A Professional Advisory and Training Service.

Educational literature, Ketogenic Diet starter packs, equipment and Patient files supplied free of charge to all UK and Irish Ketogenic Centres for their patients.

Matthew’s Friends Clinics – providing Ketogenic Dietary Therapies for all who are currently unable to gain access to local services.

None of this is possible without...

Fundraising

Matthew’s Friends do not receive any government funding and are totally reliant on fundraising and donations. By the time our families find us they are usually in a VERY bad way, dealing with a worrying and fraught situation, often fearing for their child’s life. Asking them to fundraise at this time to help provide services is not desirable, therefore the small Matthew’s Friends team have cajoled and badgered their friends and families to help fundraise over the years. We welcome ALL help and are delighted to provide resources such as a Justgiving page for sponsored events, running vests, sponsor forms, t-shirts and anything else that we can for those willing to support us. Please do contact us if you can help.

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