This book beautifully highlights the clinical picture parents may see in their child with a blocked shunt. It systematically runs through the experience of any patient who may have shunt malfunction, from entering the hospital, the shunt revision and the recovery. The book is written in a manner as to remove the mystery, uncertainty and fear of what the process may involve.

I think it will educate patients, parents and health professionals, while providing reassurance to the child. The book is an enjoyable children’s story, for all children, yet it tackles the potentially serious issues which may occur with shunt malfunction. I would like to congratulate the author for the information this book will provide for all those affected by hydrocephalus.

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with love from
Benny Bear to:

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Written by Rosemary Batchelor and Val Meyer-Hall from
Spina bifida • Hydrocephalus • Information • Networking • Equality - SHINE
Illustrated by Charlotte Meyer whose sister has hydrocephalus
This is Benny the bear. Benny is a special bear. Benny has a shunt because he has hydrocephalus.
Benny has had his shunt since he was a very little bear. He has had it for so long that sometimes he forgets that he has one!

Mummy doesn't forget though. She makes sure that Benny has his shunt alert card in his pocket and that he has plenty to drink; she reminds anyone who looks after Benny that he has hydrocephalus.

Having a shunt doesn't stop Benny from doing all the things that his friends do.
He rides his bike, he plays football, he likes to jump on the trampoline and he is the best swimmer in the school!
One morning when it was time to get up, Benny was really grumpy. “I don’t want to go to school today” he said.

“Are you poorly?” asked Mummy Bear.

“No” said Benny “just very very tired.”

“Then you’ll feel better when you’ve got up and had your porridge” said Mummy and soon Benny was dressed and off to school.
Later, Benny’s teacher telephoned Mummy Bear to say that she didn’t think he was very well; he was sleepy, he said he had a headache and he just wanted to sit quietly indoors when the other children went out to play.

This worried Mummy Bear. Benny liked playing with his friends more than anything!

She went to collect Benny. Benny cried when he saw Mummy then fell asleep in the car.
When they got home, Mummy lifted Benny out of the car. Just in time! - he was sick on the garden! Poor Benny!

Mummy quickly phoned the hospital then phoned Daddy Bear to tell him that they needed to take Benny to the ward where he stayed when he had his shunt fitted.
Benny lay still so that his head didn’t hurt. He closed his eyes and hid his face away from the light. He didn’t want to talk, and he didn’t even want to stroke Cat who purred and purred when she saw him. He just wanted to lie quietly and go to sleep.

Soon Daddy arrived and they went to the hospital where the clever neurosurgeon who put in the shunt when Benny was little was waiting to see him.
He listened while Benny told him that he had a bad headache and didn’t seem to mind that Benny was cross at being disturbed and kept falling asleep.

He looked in Benny’s ears and eyes with a special light, he shone the light in Benny’s mouth and felt his pulse.

“I think we’d better look at your shunt” he said “I’ll arrange for you to have a scan”
A nurse arrived. “Hello Benny” she said “I’m Diane and I’m going to look after you while you’re in the hospital. And I’ll look after Giraffe too!”

Diane showed them to a bed in a quiet part of the ward. She wrote Benny’s name on a special bracelet and fastened it onto his wrist (Giraffe had one as well), then she took his temperature before Benny went for his scan.

Benny was used to the scanner and, although he did not like it much, he knew that if he lay very still he would be out in no time.
The scan picture showed that the shunt was broken and wasn’t working properly.

By this time Benny felt so poorly that he didn’t care when Mummy told him that he would need a new shunt. He just wanted to feel better!

Diane explained that, as he was such a furry little bear, he would need a bit of his head shaved so that his new shunt could be fitted. “Don’t worry” she said “it will soon grow back”
Then a porter took Benny on a trolley to theatre. Mummy and Diane walked with him and, of course, Giraffe came too!

All the doctors and nurses in the theatre wore blue pyjamas which made Benny want to laugh! “You must be Benny” said one “I’m your anaesthetist and I’m just going to pop you off to sleep so that you can have your nice new shunt”

The next thing Benny knew he was falling asleep!

“Count to ten, Benny” said Mummy and Benny counted 1... 2.... 3......
He woke up to find that Mummy was by his bed: he had a bandage on his head and felt a bit sore.

The ward was busy and quite noisy but Benny was happy to sit up and look round at the other patients. All he wanted now was a drink! And perhaps a honey sandwich!
Benny stayed in hospital for 3 days. Mummy was there most of the time, Daddy came in after work and Granny brought Sally to see him too.

Benny had a good time on the ward. He made friends with Lola who had just had a new shunt too, the neurosurgeon came to see him and Benny beat him at Snakes and Ladders, his class sent him a huge homemade Get Well card - and all the time he felt better and better.

He did miss Cat though, and he missed his own bedroom, and he even missed teasing Sally! So he was pleased when Daddy came to take him home.

Diane explained that Benny had some little wire clips in the skin on his head and that he would need to come back to have the clips taken out.
Everyone at home was pleased to see that Benny was feeling so much better again.

His friends were happy to see him too. They couldn't wait for Benny to go back to school. "I'll be there soon" he said "first I have to go and have my clips out. I think I'll pick some flowers from the garden to say thank you to Diane"

And that's just what Benny did!
some words that you may not know

Hydrocephalus
This is when the brain produces too much fluid or the fluid does not drain properly.

Shunt
A tube that takes away any extra fluid from the head and drains it into the tummy (or sometimes another part of the body) where it is absorbed naturally.

Shunt Alert Card
Ask a grown up to get you one from Shine. You should carry your card with you in your pocket or bag every time you go out. If you lose it (or put it in the washing machine!), we will send another one.

Clips
To hold the skin together after surgery instead of stitches.

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Website: shinecharity.org.uk
This is a story about a special bear with a shunt but lots of girls and boys have shunts too. Perhaps you are one of them.