Benny goes on holiday
"In this book, Benny’s adventures continue with a family holiday to France. Because Benny has a shunt, his mummy meets with Benny’s neurosurgeon to check that all is safe for the trip. The neurosurgeon gives Benny’s mummy a CD-ROM which contains all the information about Benny just in case he has to see another doctor whilst he is away. Having a shunt does not stop Benny flying on a commercial flight and having a wonderful holiday with his family. I am sure you will enjoy hearing all about it.”

Mr Dominic Thompson
Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon
Great Ormond Street Hospital, London

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.

He is a very special bear because
Benny is a bear with hydrocephalus.

Benny is going on holiday.
Ben

ny and his sister, Sally, and their mummy and daddy are going to stay in a caravan on a campsite in France. Daddy thinks that it would be a good idea to travel by plane so that the journey is quicker. Benny is not very good at long journeys.

Everyone is very excited! But there is so much to do!
First of all Mummy and Benny go to visit the clever neurosurgeon who did the shunt operation which helped to make Benny better when he was a very little bear.

Mummy Bear was a bit anxious in case Benny was poorly in France.

"I’m glad you have come to see me" said the neurosurgeon as they looked at pictures of Benny’s scans on the special screen.

"You can have a CD-ROM with these if you would like it, then you can take it on holiday with you so you can show it to a French doctor if Benny is ill while you’re away.

It will be perfectly safe for you to go in an aeroplane if you want to, so have a good holiday, Benny - and don’t eat too many snails in France!"
When they got home, Benny was very happy! But he was very worried too. Benny was a bear who worried about things he had never done before and he worried about new places too.

"What will I do on the plane?"
he thought "Will I have to sit still?"

"How will I sleep without my special pillow?"

"Can I take Giraffe on holiday?"

"Will I understand what people in France are saying?"

"Will I have to eat snails.............?"
Poor Benny! He was too worried to sleep that night and cried until Mummy came in to see him.

"Oh Benny" said Mummy "no need to cry. I'll explain everything in the morning. We're going to have a great holiday".
So, next day Mummy and Sally and Benny practiced sitting still and pretended that they were in the plane. Mummy gave them drinks so that their ears didn’t feel funny when the plane was taking off. Then they played quiet games like I-spy and drawing.

Benny started to feel much happier so Mummy taught him and Sally how to say "please" and "thank you" and "good morning" in French. All day they said "s’il vous plaît" and "merci" and "bonjour". What polite little bears!

And while Mummy was with Benny and Sally, Daddy made a list of everything he needed to do. He telephoned the airline to make sure that all the family could sit together on the plane just like they had practiced with Mummy.
He took Benny and Sally to have their photographs taken for their passports and, on the way back home, they went to the bank to collect their special money for France.

That evening Mummy made a real French meal for supper. Benny loved the long loaf and the creamy cheese, he ate the onion soup and laughed at the big tomatoes. He was especially pleased to see no snails!
In a few days it was time to go on holiday.

The whole family got up early and Benny took the cat to stay with Auntie Kate next door while Daddy packed everything into the car.

"Come on Benny" called Sally and they all drove off to the airport.

The airport was big and noisy; Benny held tightly to Mummy's hand while they checked in their luggage and showed their new passports to a man in a smart blue uniform.
Then a bus took them to the plane. Benny held Mummy’s hand even more tightly until they got to their seats.

Benny sat by the window so he could watch as the plane took off.

Ouch! His ears started to hurt! Mummy gave him a drink and he was soon better and started to enjoy himself.

Benny and Mummy played a game and had a meal on a funny plastic tray and - in no time it seemed - they landed in France.

Daddy took them to their hire car and looked at a map to find the way to the campsite.
Benny laughed and laughed because the steering wheel was on the wrong side of the car! "Shh!" said Mummy. "Let Daddy concentrate".

Everything was so strange and so new that the journey went very quickly and they were soon at their big caravan at the Campsites campsite.

The weather was hot and sunny. The campsite had tents and caravans and a swimming pool and shops and lots of people.

Mummy made Benny a special wristband to wear in case he wandered off and got lost. On the wristband it said My name is Benny Bear. I am staying at Campsites.

Mummy had written it in French and in English! And Sally had one too!
The holiday was great!! The family went on the beach and Benny swam in the sea. When he came out of the sea, he put on his sunhat and played under the parasol in the shade. Some days he and Sally went to Cubs Club where they met lots of other bears and had fun.
Mummy told the leaders at Cubs Club that Benny had a shunt and they made sure that he didn’t get too hot and that he had plenty of drinks.

Benny enjoyed sailing and surfing and riding on the pedal boats; he liked painting and drawing and running about on the sand. He made friends even though he couldn’t always understand what the others were saying, and he liked having Sally with him.
He liked it when Daddy cooked on the barbeque in the evenings; he liked staying up late and sitting outside the caravan and he liked sleeping on the bottom bunk with his special pillow.
All too soon, the holiday was over and it was time to go home.

Benny felt grumpy! He stamped his feet and shouted that he wanted to stay. Mummy quietly put him into the French hire car and they all set off for the airport.

Benny soon cheered up. He was going on a plane again! He would have his lunch from the funny plastic tray!

He would see Cat again, and Auntie Kate.

And he would be able to tell his friends all about his holiday in France.
some words that you may not know

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

Neurosurgeon
A doctor who works in a hospital and who specialises in problems that happen to peoples' brains.

Scan
A picture of the inside of the head which helps doctors to understand how to help their patient.

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!), ask us to send you another one.
Some things for grown-ups to remember

- Do tell your travel insurance company that your child has hydrocephalus treated by a shunt.
- Getting a UK passport can take up to 6 weeks - all family members will need one.
- Give your neurosurgeon notice that you would like your child’s scans on CD-ROM: it will take time and there will be a charge.
- Contact Shine for advice.
- If your child is taking prescribed medication, you will need to take a copy of the prescription with you.
- Ring the airline to check all the family can sit together.

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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.