

**NATIONAL POLICE DEFENSE
FOUNDATION**

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“OPERATION KIDS PROGRAM”

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH RESPONSE TO NPDF REQUEST HELPS

SOLVES MYSTERY DISEASE FOR ITALIAN TEENAGER

In October 2014, the National Police Defense Foundation (NPDF) learned about the plight of fifteen-year-old Claudia Digregorio from Santeramo, Italy who was suffering from an unknown illness which left her severely disabled. Claudia’s physicians in Italy were unable to determine a diagnosis or recommended treatment for her disease. The plight of Claudia caught the attention of Pope Francis who requested the assistance of the international community to help Claudia which prompted the NPDF “Operation Kids” program to take immediate action. The NPDF was able to convince the National Institute of Health (NIH) to conduct a clinical research study of Claudia’s unknown disease at their medical facilities in Bethesda, Maryland.

On August 26, 2015, NPDF Executive Director Joseph Occhipinti and a NPDF delegation traveled to Rome, Italy to help transport Claudia and her parents to the United States for the NIH clinical study. When Pope Francis learned of this humanitarian mission, he requested a special audience at the Vatican with Claudia, her parents and the NPDF delegation.

On August 29, 2015, Claudia arrived in the United States where for several weeks she underwent extensive testing that similarly baffled the NIH physicians. However, they were still determined to identify Claudia’s unknown disease.

The NPDF is pleased to announce that the continued scientific research undertaken by Dr. Carsten Bonnemann at the NIH clinical Center revealed a pathology with many hallmarks of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) which explained why Claudia’s muscles were severely weakened or

paralyzed. According to Dr. Bonnemann, the NIH may be able to use a precision gene silencing strategy to treat this type of ALS.

Special Thanks to Dr. Carsten Bonnemann and his entire NIH staff who responded to the NPDF's request to help Claudia and after six years diligently pursued her case and finally put a diagnosis and potential treatment for her disease. Moreover, it is important to recognize the NPDF Delegation who helped coordinate this humanitarian mission that included Dr. Dhimant Balar, NPDF Italia President Italian Police Officer Michele Mastrosimone, Delegate Italian Chief Inspector Sergio Cirelli (Ret) and NPDF ICE Agent Francesco Cascione.

To learn more about the Operation Kids program that have successfully arranged life saving medical treatment and operations for critically ill children worldwide visit www.npdf.org or call 877-325-KIDS.

