

The Record LOCAL

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Top doctors, Italian ice, lots of love

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STAFF WRITER

Injured pitcher 'definitely improved'

A neurologist from Washington, D.C., an autonomic nervous system specialist from Philadelphia and a neuron-psychologist and psycho-pharmacologist — both from Manhattan — have spent a lot of time with Steven Domalewski lately.

They, and others, have been at his bedside in a Paterson hospital, using cutting-edge treatments

while trying to bring the 12-year-old pitcher out of a coma.

"He's progressing at a really good rate," Dr. Philip De Fina said Friday. "He has definitely improved. His alertness has improved. His dad has been feeding him little bits of Italian ice, and he's breathing very well on his own."

De Fina is head of the Man-

hattan-based International Brain Research Foundation. He and 10 doctors have swooped in to treat Steven — for free. Other specialists have also helped. Their goal, they say, is to restore the boy's brain functions to a point where he can walk and talk.

Steven was pitching in a Wayne Police Athletic League game June 6 when a batter lined

a ball into his chest at the exact millisecond between heartbeats. The impact caused an extremely rare condition called commotio cordis in which the heart stops. That deprived Steven of oxygen for an undetermined amount of time, causing damage to his brain. He remains at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Paterson in what doctors call a "very light

coma."

Steven's case came to the attention of De Fina, a neuron-psychologist from Chester Township in Morris County, through his 15-year-old daughter.

"I had left a newspaper on the table because there was a story in it about me," De Fina said. "Next to it was a story about Steven and she said, 'Hey Dad, did you see this?'" De Fina started the foundation about a year ago with six

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Boy: Lots of love plus an Italian ice

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other doctors after receiving a \$2 million donation from a patient some of the doctors had brought out of a coma.

Since then, the foundation has worked intensely with three coma patients including Steven — the youngest by far — and has worked to develop treatments for coma, Alzheimer's, autism and Parkinson's. Its hub is New York University's Brain Research Laboratories and Bellevue Hospital, but more than 100 neuroscientists and clinicians worldwide work for the foundation, including Dr. Julian Bailes, a neurosurgeon who treated the lone survivor of West Virginia's Sago mine accident.

The foundation's neuroscientists — with the help of physicians at St. Joseph's — say they aren't taking

the wait-and-see approach often used with coma patients. Instead, they're using high-tech equipment, unique medications and nutritional supplements to stimulate the brain.

"We're so grateful for the care that he's getting," said Marie Fullerton, Steven's aunt who has been staying at the family's home on Wilson Avenue in Wayne since the incident. "You want to pray that every child has the benefit of the very best care."

Fullerton also said the family wanted to give credit to Howard Levine, a Wayne resident trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation who revived Steven last month when he was struck on the ball-field.

"Once you've learned it, you know it," Levine said. "I'm just

Fast facts

Medical experts from the Manhattan-based International Brain Research Foundation treat Wayne youngster Steven Domalewski weekly. They include Philip De Fina, Elkhonon Goldberg, Sandlin Lowe, Roy John, Leslie Pritchep, Jane Halper, Peter Bernad, Joseph Columbo and Sandra Maiorano. Their groundbreaking treatments for coma, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and autism include:

- Computerized brain imaging.
- Unique combinations of FDA-approved medications and nutritional supplements such as vitamin B.
- Low-level nerve stimulation to increase the flow of oxygen to the brain.

For more information: ibrinc.org

thrilled Steven is alive."

The boy's parents, Joe and Nancy, have remained with their son around the clock for the past six weeks.

"It's heart-wrenching to see parents in that position, but these parents have been incredible," De Fi-

na said. "We're very impressed with their dedication, optimism and positive energy. We've told the parents we're going to be there for the long run and we're not giving up."

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