

# Back in one piece

For accidents big and small, orthopedic traumatologist is ready to respond

by Lia Tremblay

One November evening, Heather Faircloth was at home with her 4-year-old granddaughter, Luna, when suddenly Luna let out an awful scream from the playroom.

“It was that kind of cry that makes you come running,” Faircloth said.

Luna, while shuffling around in her “princess shoes,” had slipped and fallen, injuring her arm when she tried to break her fall. Faircloth knew right away it was serious.

“I knew it was broken,” she said. “When she cried out, it was a different kind of cry. And when I felt her arm there was kind of a knot, and it was very warm.”





Faircloth said there was no question they'd be going to the hospital. She and her husband scooped Luna up and took her to the car.

At Cape Fear Valley Medical Center's Pediatric Emergency Department, Faircloth went back with Luna while her husband waited in the lobby. She immediately felt they were in good hands.

"The ER doctor was outstanding," she said. "Everyone was amazing. The nurses were so good with her, and with me. I was more afraid than she was!"

Faircloth was anxious when she learned she wouldn't be able to accompany Luna into the X-ray procedure. She stood in the hallway just outside, waiting for the door to open, certain that Luna was terrified and in pain.

"But when it was over and they said I could go in," Faircloth said, "Luna was laughing with the tech and picking out stickers."

By that time, Faircloth had something else to worry about: after seeing Luna's X-ray, the doctor was calling a specialist in to talk to her about the possible need for surgery. That's when she met David Kerr, MD, Director of Orthopedic Trauma Surgery.

Dr. Kerr is Cape Fear Valley's first fellowship-trained orthopedic traumatologist. He handles not only injuries of the bones and joints, but specifically the kind that happen abruptly — often due to accidents like Luna's.

"Any way you could imagine getting injured," he said, "we take care of it. Motor vehicle collisions are very common, as well as falling from ladders, slip and fall on ice ... we see it all."

By specializing in these kinds of injuries, orthopedic traumatologists can offer the best care for what may be a very complex injury in very chaotic circumstances. Because children's growing bones and daring natures can make them especially prone to orthopedic trauma, Dr. Kerr said pediatric care was an important part of his training.

"A lot of casting and splinting of all kinds of injuries for kids," he said. "I spent some time down at the Children's Hospital of Atlanta doing that. That's one of the larger centers in the country for pediatrics and pediatric orthopedics."

After reviewing Luna's chart and talking with the family, Dr. Kerr recommended surgery to repair the fracture. He admitted her for an overnight stay to get some fluids and prepare for the surgery.

"He said the way she caught herself, breaking right at the elbow like that, is a very common injury," said Faircloth. "He placed two pins near her elbow to fix it, and she did great."

Faircloth said Dr. Kerr's expertise was reassuring, but it was his calm, engaging way with Luna that really impressed her.

"He printed out her X-rays and explained everything to her," Faircloth said. "She's only 4, but she's a very bright girl and she likes to be told exactly what's going to happen. So we appreciated that."

Even Luna's stuffed animal, Puppy Duppy, got top-notch treatment.

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– Heather Faircloth

"Apparently Puppy Duppy also got injured in the fall," said Faircloth, laughing. "So Dr. Kerr said he would have surgery too. He went off to surgery with her and came out all bandaged up."

Luna was excited to leave the hospital, taking copies of her X-rays so she could show her friends at school what happened. She also left with a white cast on her arm, but that didn't last long.

"He told her when she came for her checkup in a few days she could pick whatever color she wanted," Faircloth said. "So as soon as we got to the office that day, she said, 'You have to put on a different color because this one isn't pretty.'"

Encased in hot pink, Luna's arm continued to heal for several weeks and is finally good as new. Faircloth said as scary as that night was, she's glad Cape Fear Valley made it easier for the whole family — especially Luna.

"I think it was important because at 4 years old, if it had been traumatic, that could have scared her from ever wanting to see a doctor for anything again in the future," Faircloth said. "So I'm just glad this experience was healthy, happy and nice. We couldn't have asked for better."

For more information about orthopedics at Cape Fear Valley Health, visit [capecfearvalley.com/ortho](http://capecfearvalley.com/ortho).