Dwarfism: Types, History, and Support
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Medical Facts about Dwarfism
- 200 types of dwarfism including short-trunk, short-limb, proportionate, and pituitary
- Causes of dwarfism: spontaneous genetic alteration, changes in the egg or sperm cells, or by genes inherited from one or both parents
- Also caused by chromosomal abnormalities, pituitary gland disorders, absorptive problems, and kidney problems.
- Different types of dwarfism have different medical complications, but all have specific medical needs.
- Anesthesia complications are a deadly concern for a group of people with restricted airways due to size and spinal issues
- Hearing loss, speech delays, and retinal detachments are common in many types of dwarfism.
- Usually no taller than 4 feet 10 inches, although some types of skeletal dysplasias can be average height.
- 80% of Little People are born to average height parents
- Dwarfism occurs in all races and ethnicities
- Pediatricians have limited knowledge beyond achondroplasia
- Spinal fusions, joint replacements, foramen magnum, and other major orthopedic & neuro-surgeries are common.
- BioMarin has BNN 111 in clinical trials; it aims to eliminate achondroplasia, and has huge ethical considerations.

Interesting Facts about Dwarfism
- The first known dwarf lived more than 11,000 years ago; his grave was discovered in southern Italy in 1963
- Dwarfism has been seen in Egyptian sculptures, royal European courts, sacred Hindu texts on Valmana
- The word “midget” was coined in 1865, to define ‘an extremely small person; spec. such a person publicly exhibited as a curiosity.” It is derived from the word midge, which is a small insect. It is considered highly offensive.
- The Mauthausen concentration camp did medical experiments on people with dwarfism & other disabilities
- All of the Munchkins in the Wizard of Oz had pituitary dwarfism, which has largely been eradicated in the US with the availability of Human Growth Hormone

Community Resources in the United States, and Beyond
- Little People of America (LPA) is an advocacy group for people with dwarfism.
- LPA National conferences feature Medical Advisory Boards (MAB), information and support sessions, and social events.
- LPA offers adoption services, scholarships and grants, advocacy and community outreach
- There are 14 regions within LPA, comprised of local chapters, with bi-annual meetings
- MAB medical professionals are experts in skeletal dysplasia that donate their time, and pay their own way, to do consultations at national and regional LPA conferences, sometimes being the only professional people will ever meet that is knowledgeable about global.
- Many people travel to regional Skeletal Dysplasia Centers around the United States in order to receive expert medical care. Often, people pay significant sums to go to these centers.
- LPA has an advisor to ANSI, which helps recommend accessible building codes in the US.
- Understanding Dwarfism is an education site for helping the general population understand dwarfism, and to spread awareness.
- Other countries have their own versions of LPA, such as the Restricted Growth Associations of Ireland and Britain, and LPUK. Facebook groups, which came from Yahoo groups such as POLP (Parents of Little People) and Dwarfism, help raise awareness globally.
- Camp Victory Junction in Randleman, NC added a Skeletal Dysplasia Summer Camp week for 2016

Dwarfism and the Disability Community
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of people with dwarfism.
- Many types of dwarfism do have orthopedic considerations, but all types of dwarfism have accessibility needs, such as reaching gas pumps, ATMs, pay phones, elevator buttons, and more.
- Most children will need accommodations at school, which are covered under Section 504 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Common accommodations are: more time to pass between classes without penalty, more time on tests if manual dexterity is an issue, a lowered swing or tether ball line, a step stool (portable or permanent) in the bathrooms and at water fountains, easy open door handle levels (not knobs), a light pressure on automatic door closure settings, a lowered mirror in the bathroom, a lowered paper towel dispenser, modified requirements for PE
- Many people with dwarfism struggle to find gainful employment after university
- People with dwarfism are qualified to use Centers for Independent Living and Vocational Rehab, but often they are not aware of these resources.

References & Further Readings
- www.dwarfparents.com/bmn-111
- www.beyondachondroplasia.org/blogue/?lang=en