OT and Hope!

Therapy in general in Trinidad and Tobago has always been a luxury service offered to very few who could afford it one and who can access it two.

Shamla Maharaj was born with Cerebral Palsy back in 1985 and it happened as a result of negligence during birth. This resulted in her unable to walk, control, and her body movements and has control of only one side of her body. Shamla only sat up when she was almost 5 years old.

Despite the Circumstances she was able to successfully complete her Bachelor of Science Degree (BCs.) in Agribusiness and Marketing from the University of the West Indies, St Augustine. She is currently pursuing her Master’s Degree (MSc.) in Agribusiness and Marketing at the same institution. Shamla is currently working at The National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation as an Associate Professional in Marketing. Shamla is the currently a Social and Disability Ambassador for The Ministry of the People and Social Development. She was the Trinidad Express Youth Individual of the Year 2010. The preceding is just a general outlook of her academic and other miscellaneous accomplishments to date.

Shamla recalled holding rails with her hand and standing but this was short lived because of the lack of practice. Shamla's father was a cane labourer and her mom was a housewife and sewed part time to help the financial aiding home.

Shamla never afforded any type or form of Therapy since she was 4 years old. Anything she learnt was part of her own experiment and part of her patents and nurses at the Princess Elizabeth Special School.

Shamla is started occupational Therapy November of last year. She is currently receiving therapy free of charge from her OT Miss Priya Gomes. The nature of Shamla's disability is one that restricts her from lifting herself because of a lack of coordination and balance. This has lead to the compromising of her family members to allow her the opportunities of having a "normal" life one that one often takes for granted. During her BSc degree her entire family including herself had to make a lot of sacrifices especially her mother who stayed up there with her and left her profession in order to aid Shamla in everyday task.

Shamla has an ultimate goal of lifting herself something she has never been able to do. Her dream is to be able to get from one chair to the next and be able to use the bathroom by herself with the aid of no one. Before starting OT Shamla always had a fright of what her future would turn out to be if none of her family members are around. It’s scary often bolding the unsure future because of her immobility.

Getting the opportunity to receive OT is a dream come true because it gives her hope and not only hope but surety of a future of independence. She plans on shattering the knowledge that persons with Cerebral Palsy can only receive exercise. Shamla plans on using the words that she used all her life "Determination and Persistence" and work hard with her therapist to break barriers of what a persons with Cerebral Palsy can do or achieve with OT. For her to lift herself from one point to the next would trump all other achievements she has ever made.