



## BLOSSOMS

It was an extraordinary spring in Pittsburgh, with blushing azaleas and dogwood blossoms as big as saucers. And in April, a little girl from Virginia was the thousandth patient of University of Pittsburgh neurological and otolaryngological surgeons to undergo an endonasal procedure (an alternative to traditional brain surgery, in which doctors remove cysts and tumors through the nose without making any incisions). But the remarkable nature of the season, and of the surgery, was not so interesting to her. The child preferred to talk about a dance recital or her pink dog, which, she explained with gravitas, “is not real.”

The dermoid cyst at the base of her brain was, however, real. So the girl’s parents told her that the doctors would remove it. That seemed reasonable. Six weeks after the procedure, as a photographer adjusted his camera, the girl fidgeted happily in a chair. Her mother called her by pet names and made silly faces to elicit a smile. Then the girl caught the flash of a bird in a tree, and, like any wonderfully ordinary child, turned to look.

—Jennifer Lee

PHOTOGRAPHY | JOHN MCCAULLEY