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Amelia has proved all of them wrong

Sunday Telegraph, Sydney



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The baby poisoned in a tragic hospital gas bungle won't give up her fight

EXCLUSIVE
CYDONEE MARDON

AMELIA Khan was the newborn baby given six months to live after suffering irreversible brain damage when administered nitrous oxide gas instead of oxygen in a horrifying hospital mix-up.

Today she is a determined four-year-old who loves to kick a ball, swim in the ocean and lights up her childcare centre with her personality and will.

Like any big sister she shrugs away her adoring little sister Eva when she instinctively wipes food from her mouth she can't clean herself,

and bristles at needing her to straighten her up when she's sitting awkwardly and can't right herself.

Amelia wants to do things on her own despite her quadriplegic cerebral palsy, because her selfless parents have taught her to shoot for the stars.

"Watching Eva grow with Amelia is just so beautiful. She knows there is something

unique about her sister and she always tries to help," her mum Benish Khan told the Sunday Telegraph.

Amelia inhaled the colour-

less gas commonly used for sedation and pain relief shortly after birth in June 2016 after a subcontractor mixed up two gas pipelines in the delivery ward. The chilling bungle at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital left the healthy baby with a traumatic brain injury.

Devastated, Danial and Benish agonised over whether to turn off her life support. Doctors predicted Amelia had just months to live and her condition was unlikely to improve. Amelia proved them all wrong.

And every year she brings her smile back to the hospital

that drew international attention for the mistake — celebrating with doctors and nurses who held her tiny limp body of just how far she has come on her annual check-ups. "There are so many things they said when she was born she couldn't do and that her brain injury was irreversible," Mrs Khan said.

"They said she wouldn't live past six months old so the fact she continues to thrive was a big surprise for everyone."

The Western Sydney couple have empathy for the



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staff that experienced their own kind of hell when they discovered what had caused Amelia's disabilities. In fact they want Amelia to grow up to see her mum and dad hold no grudges.

"After she was born, for a good month we were still going back to the hospital for care because it took that long before they figured out what was wrong," Mrs Khan explained.

"For the first month of her life was the hardest. She was on palliative care and we built up a relationship with all her carers, we know how hard it would have been for them too."

Mr and Mrs Khan don't pretend the past four years have been easy. They struggled with life in the spotlight with a baby with special needs and were increasingly frustrated that more wasn't being done to

stop such a tragedy from happening again.

"There were so many things to juggle. It was breaking us a lot as a family at home, it was frustrating to see such a simple and obvious change they could make and they weren't willing to do that," Mr Khan said.

"We felt politics was more important than ensuring people's lives are safe. So many issues that led to the whole incident ... unqualified people, people signing off things that were not correct. For us it just felt like it wasn't important or taken seriously."

The contractor responsible for the gas mix-up that poisoned Amelia, and new-

born John Ghanem who died a month later at the same hospital after also being given the deadly gas instead of oxygen, was fined \$100,000.

SafeWork NSW brought a case against Christopher Turner, 58, who was contracted by BOC Limited to install medical gas pipes at the hospital. The Khans were "extremely disappointed" that other workers hadn't also been held to account for their involvement.

Mrs Khan discovered Queensland had changed laws as a direct result of Amelia's case and Victoria already had in place legislation that prevented such disasters.

The couple heard Labor MP Mark Buttigieg speak on

the issue and hoped he could be their voice.

"It was raised with me by the plumbers' union that this industry wasn't regulated," Mr Buttigieg explained.

"You could walk in off the street and install medical gas. Obviously that's worrying, it requires specialist skills.

"After I made my speech in parliament and Benish and Danial reached out to me.

"I decided to move a private members bill on behalf of the Labor Opposition. It passed through the upper house unopposed which was unheard of. When it got to the lower house it was voted down. It was only because of the courage and commitment of Danial and Benish that we

were able to raise attention.

"The government got dragged kicking and screaming and introduced their own

bill. That was deficient, there were too many exemptions. I moved 29 amendments and every one was accepted.

"The end result was a very robust form of legislation that makes sure people are qualified properly, that trained people install medical gas.

"I don't think I'll ever do anything as important as that in my life again."

For the Khans it's time to focus on giving Amelia every chance at a normal life. "There is nothing she is limited from doing, but she needs assistance with it," her dad said. She lifts her left leg

to signal "yes" and her right leg to single "no", and talks to her parents via a special program on her iPad.

"If she wants to go to the beach we support her whole body so that she can feel the water on her toes. There's nothing she can't do because we are there for her."

The couple feel there needs to be more support for parents of children with special needs.

"Your life becomes completely focused on the child, no one asks how the parents are doing. We were fortunate enough to push for that ... we pushed a lot with Bankstown Hospital and they help us through the process," Mrs Khan said.



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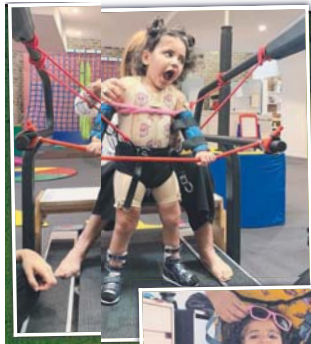
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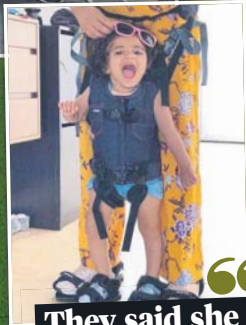
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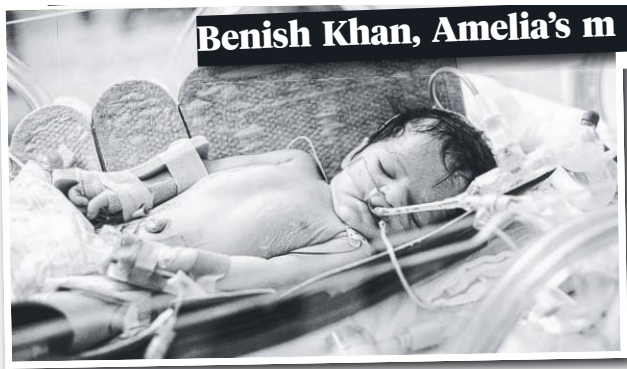
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The Khans with daughter Amelia, who continues to thrive and surprise. Pictures: Toby Zerna



“They said she wouldn’t live past six months, that her brain injury was irreversible”



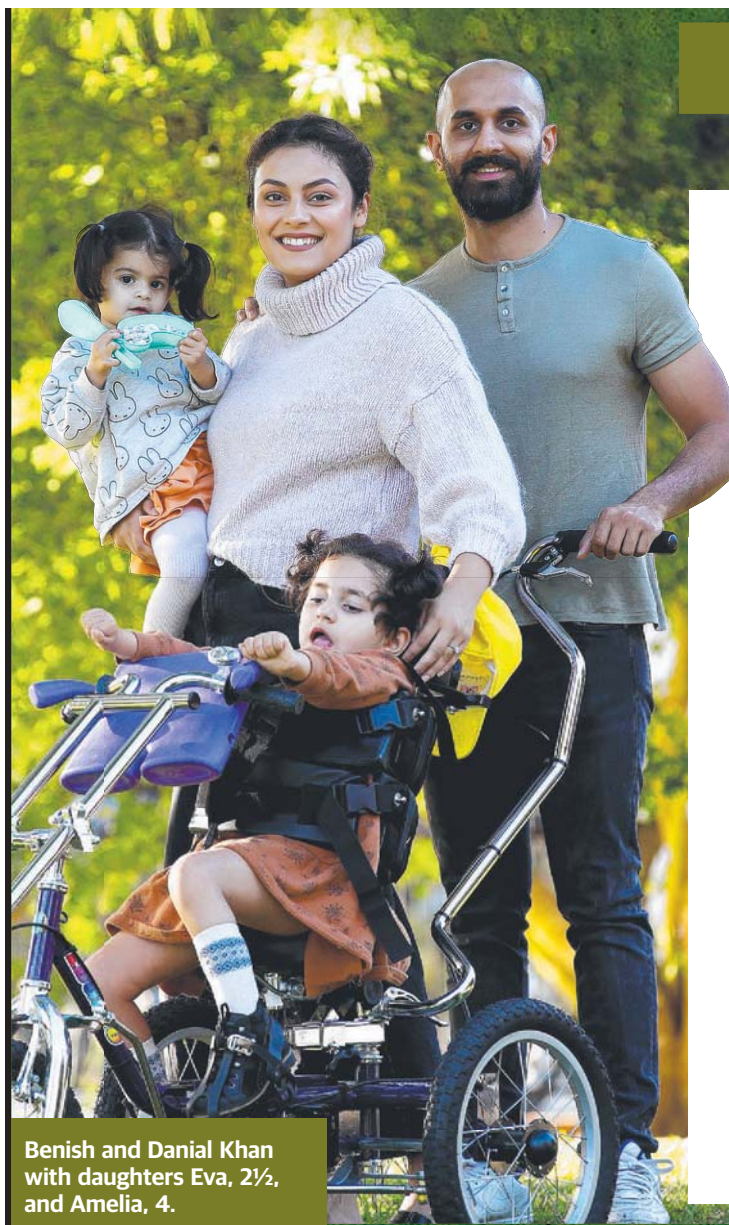
Benish Khan, Amelia’s m



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Benish and Danial Khan with daughters Eva, 2½, and Amelia, 4.