

Case back in court over experimental treatment

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Eleventh-hour evidence about an experimental treatment for Charlie Gard will be heard in the High Court on Monday after Great Ormond Street Hospital sought a hearing after international pressure to keep him alive.

Doctors treating him said they wanted to give the court a chance to assess claims from doctors in New York and Rome to make certain that continuing to withhold treatment was in his best interest.

Specialists at the Vatican-run Bambino Gesù Hospital in Rome have written to the London hospital urging it to reconsider because tests in mice and patients with a similar, though not the same, genetic condition had shown "dramatic improvements".

Great Ormond Street said: "Two international hospitals and their researchers have communicated to us as late as the last 24 hours that they have fresh evidence about their proposed experimental treatment. And we believe, in common with Charlie's parents, it is right to explore this evidence."

Charlie, 11 months, has a rare condition that has led to irreversible brain damage, leaving him reliant on a ventilator. His parents, Chris Gard and Connie Yates, raised £1.3 million through

crowd funding to send him to the US for a therapy that has never been tried on anyone with mitochondrial DNA depletion syndrome.

A series of court hearings agreed with Great Ormond Street that the treatment would be futile and could cause pain and distress. Interventions from President Trump and the Pope revived his parents' hopes, and they said pressure from the White House stopped the hospital turning off Charlie's life support last weekend.

Hopes that a passport issued by the Vatican might enable Charlie to go to Italy were unlikely to come to fruition, a Vatican source said.

Great Ormond Street said the court ruling stopped Charlie, left, from being moved, saying that his best interests were served by turning off his ventilator and offering palliative care. "Our view has not changed. We believe it is right to seek the High Court's view in light of the claimed new evidence," the hospital said.

Alastair Sutcliffe, professor of general paediatrics at University College London, said: "Charlie has one of those most severe of mitochondrial diseases and is untreatable. Medicine is advancing at a wonderful speed but some illnesses are still fatal."

