

Tumour gone, 25-yr-old ready to face life anew

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Kolkata: Mithilesh Kumar had stopped looking at the mirror for years now. With a 1kg tumour hanging from his face, the 25-year-old had shut himself from the world. Apart from the facial deformity, the tumour had pushed his left eye out of the socket, damaging it forever, blocked his nose and had extended into the oral cavity. But a surgery at Narayana Superspeciality Hospital Howrah later, life has started looking beautiful for the daily wage earner.

Mithilesh, who lives on the outskirts of Jamshedpur, was all of five years when he had developed the tumour on the left side of his face. It kept growing over the years. Though his widowed mother ran from pillar to post for his treatment. But poverty and inaccessibility to quality healthcare proved her attempts futile.

Around eight months ago, Mithilesh went to a health camp organized near his house and met doctors from Narayana Superspeciality. All of a sudden, things started looking up.

"It's a tumour called osteoblastoma, a very rare kind of benign bone tumour. Only around four such cases have been reported in India, that too in small sizes, so far. It involved his entire left maxilla, extended towards the base of skull, pushing his left eyeball outwards. Teeth in his left upper jaw were all misdirected because of the tumour mass, causing frequent gingivitis and bleeding. He was unable to chew well, thus condemned to semisolid diet," said head and neck surgeon Dr Rajdeep Guha who came across Mithilesh.

With time, the tumour had become painful and it bled at times. He could not eat or sleep properly. After knowing that

the family could not afford the surgery, the hospital decided to rescue him and conduct the surgery free of cost. A medical board comprising Dr Guha, plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr Adhish Basu, neurosurgeon Dr Nilay Biswas, aesthetic dental surgeon Dr Ayan Mazumdar and anesthetist Dr Argha Mukherjee was formed for the task.

The surgery was challenging as Mithilesh had low haemoglobin due to chronic malnutrition. The tumour was not malignant but lesion was very extensive, which made the surgery extremely challenging. Even more challenging was the reconstruction. The young man underwent the 14-hour surgery in September last year. It took almost five months for the tissues to heal.

"We plan to conduct a cosmetic and reconstructive surgery with customized implants so that he gets back a normal face," said Dr Adhish Basu. Implants

for the surgery itself costs around Rs 5 lakh and the hospital is trying to mobilize funds.

"We appeal to individuals and corporates to contribute for the second surgery so that this young man could lead a normal life," said NSHH facility director Rakesh Verma.

The introvert Mithilesh, who would always cover his face with a towel while going out for work, has emerged a changed man after the surgery. Confident and happy, he wants to work hard now, build a house for his mother, get married and settled down some day.

"I am a loner with no friends as I feared that people would ostracize me because of the scary face I had. I want to make up for all the things I have missed in life. Life has now become such a pleasant journey for me. It would not have been possible if these doctors did not lay their hands on me," said Mithilesh.

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