

In Spain, the world's first full facial transplant

Though at least 10 partial facial transplants have been performed by plastic surgeons around the globe—beginning with surgery on a 38-year-old woman in France in 2005—last month surgeons at a hospital in Spain performed the first ever full facial transplant, according to the [Associated Press](#). After a 24-hour procedure that involved a staff of 30 medical professionals, the patient was recovering with a “completely new face from his hairline down and only one visible scar, which looks like a wrinkle running across his neck,” the AP reports. The patient, whose name has been withheld is between the ages of 20 to 40-years-old and suffered a deforming accident 5 years ago—he reportedly lost his nose, jaw and other parts of his face during an accidental shooting in 2005, according to the [Times of London](#). Yet, as Dr. Joan Pere Barret, the lead surgeon on the groundbreaking procedure, told the AP today:

“If you look him in the face, you see a normal person, like anyone else we have as a patient in the hospital.”

The patient underwent surgery at Vall d'Hebron University Hospital, Barcelona, where surgeons used donated tissue and bone from a deceased patient. Dr Barret told the *Times*:

“Relatives say that he looks in some areas like he did before the accident, but he doesn't look like the donor at all, he's changed completely... He asked to see his face on day seven after the surgery and he was very pleased and satisfied. From our point of view, he looks fantastic. He is the best facial transplant ever.”

Last April, surgeons at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital performed a [partial facial transplant](#), utilizing cadaver donations to replace the patient's nose, palate, facial nerves and muscles, as well as some skin and his upper lip. The [first facial transplant in the U.S.](#) was performed in December 2008 at the Cleveland Clinic. The patient, then 46-year-old Connie Culp, was shot in the face by her former husband in 2004, a devastating blast that destroyed her nose, upper lip and cheeks.

Patients who undergo facial transplants, like those who receive other organ donations, have to take immunosuppressant medication to reduce the possibility of rejection. But facial transplant patients and their loved ones believe that is a small price to pay to help reduce the social stigma and serious emotional and psychological trauma that can be caused by these unfortunate disfigurements.