

World's First Full Face Transplant Surgery in Spain

Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona said the patient, a young man, was given an entirely new face, including skin, jaws, chin, nose, cheeks, teeth and muscles...

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A hospital in Spain announced that it had carried out the world's first full-face transplant. The Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona said the patient, a young man, was given an entirely new face, including skin, jaws, chin, nose, cheeks, teeth and muscles. It said the 24-hour operation was performed in late March by a 30-member medical team.

In a statement on Friday, the hospital said the patient lost his face in an accident five years ago and has since been unable to swallow, speak, or breathe properly, and had to breathe and be fed through tubes. Speaking on Friday during a news conference at the hospital, Doctor Joan Pere Barret, who led the medical team that carried out facial transplant, said the patient asked to look in a mirror one week after the surgery, "and he reacted very calmly and with satisfaction" and in writing said "he said he was very grateful and satisfied." Dr Barret said that the man "absolutely does not look like a donor patient."

Barret declined to name the patient or give details of the accident in which the man lost most of his face, saying only that he was a Spaniard between 20 and 40 years old and was recovering well. The man cannot yet speak, eat or smile, but can see and swallow saliva, the surgeon said. The patient underwent psychiatric tests before the operation to determine if he would be able to confront having a totally new face, the hospital said. He is expected to remain hospitalised for two months.

Other transplant experts lauded the surgery but were not sure it could technically be called 'full-face.'

In Britain, the UK Facial Transplantation Research Team called the Spanish operation "the most complex face transplantation operation there has probably been in the world to date." It stopped short, however, of calling it the world's first full-face transplant. Barret said the operation involved removing what was left of the man's face and giving him a replacement "in one piece."

Barret said there have been 10 partial face transplant operations carried out in the world so far but that this is the first one involving a person's whole face. The world's first partial face transplant was carried out on a Isabelle Dinoire in France in November 2005. The 38 year old divorced mother of two received a new nose, chin and mouth from a brain-dead donor after being mauled by her pet Labrador. The 15-hour operation took place at the Amiens Teaching Hospital.

Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona, Spanish medical team, Doctor Joan Pere Barret, Facial transplant, Psychiatric tests, UK Facial Transplantation Research Team, Isabelle Dinoire, France, Amiens Teaching Hospital, Brain-dead donor, Partial face transplant

New face, new life

A Spanish man has undergone one of the most complex facial transplant surgeries to date. The 24-hour procedure was led by Dr. Joan Pere Barret at Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona in March.

