

## First full face transplant man reveals his new look

A Spanish man who underwent the world's first full face transplant appeared before TV cameras Monday for the first time as he was discharged from hospital in Barcelona to start a new life with his transformed look.

The 31-year-old, identified only as Oscar, appeared in public for the first time in a news conference at the Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona, Spain, Monday, July 26, 2010 to thank the family of the donor and a team of doctors that gave him a new face in March at Vall d'Hebron University Hospital, Barcelona.

### Disfigured Oscar

Oscar, who is reportedly a farmer, was disfigured in a gunshot accident five years ago. As a result of the trauma, his face was totally destroyed, which required his entire facial skin and muscles, including nose and lips, to be replaced.

He was unable to eat, speak or breathe normally since he was horrifically injured in the gun accident in 2005 which left him with no nose, no upper lip and shattered his lower jaw. He spent five years living with a gaping hole where his mouth and nose should have been.

During the 24-hour complex surgery, the 30-member medical team led by the Spanish doctor Juan Barret gave disfigured Oscar a new nose, skin, jaws, cheekbones, teeth and other features.

### Underwent pioneering surgery

In March, Oscar underwent what can be called a pioneering surgery at the Hospital Vall d'Hebron in Barcelona.

On March 20, a group of surgeons, anesthetists, nurses and transplant specialists carried out a full-face transplant, which enabled him to eat soft foods, drink liquids and to shave again.

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### Oscar braved cameras

On Monday, Oscar, who cannot yet close his eyes completely and speaks with difficulty, braved the cameras for the first time since surgery, thanking his doctors and the family of the donor, reports the Associated Press.

"I am very happy and I want to thank the surgeons and the donors especially the man who gave me the new tissues I received," he spoke, still with difficulty, at the conference.

According to the Sun, Dr Barret said: "It was a very brave thing to face everyone today because he is a quiet man who wants to live a normal life.

"He has been very isolated and wants to do what all young men want to do. He is single, he wants to go out with his friends and have fun."

### Oscar hopes to start normal life

Oscar's sister, who was not named to protect the family's privacy, said his brother is eager to start a normal life ahead.

She said: "We are very happy and content and very grateful to the hospital because now he can start his new life.

"He is looking forward to doing the normal little things in life again, the things we do every day without having any problems. Things like walking down the street without people looking at him five times.



According to Dr Barret, Oscar is expected to regain up to 90 per cent of his facial function within a year to 18 months

"He's looking forward to sitting down with his family and having a family meal. He's very comfortable with his face, he feels very good. He used to love hunting and fishing and he wants to hunt and fish again," the woman said.

#### **Needs lengthy therapy for fully recovery**

Oscar was considered for full face transplant after nine attempts to rebuild his face had failed. The man still struggles to speak with clarity and will need months of physical therapy.

"He has readily accepted his new face with no difficulty," explained Dr Barret. "A few days after the operation he saw his reflection and was able to recognise himself and this will help him return to a normal life.

"The patient is now able to drink liquids, eat a diet of soft food and his speech is improving daily since the first words he uttered two months ago," he said.

According to Dr Barret, Oscar is expected to regain up to 90 per cent of his facial function within a year to 18 months.

"He will have to take immunosuppressant drugs for the rest of his life and there is a long journey ahead full of physiotherapy appointments but it has been a success.