

Acid attack victim starts new innings

Financial aid from country, abroad helps Jharkhand girl get treatment

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Help has poured in, not only from India, but also from abroad for treatment of acid attack victim Sonali Mukherjee from Dhanbad, Jharkhand. Having lived with a burnt upper part of the body with minimal hearing and seeing capacity, she had demanded permission of euthanasia from the Indian government in July as her family could not meet her medical needs.

In the face of lack of support from the government, Sonali had turned to civil society for help. She received financial aid for the treatment from many people across the country, including many known personalities.

On Thursday, a couple from Dubai donated Rs 1.5 lakh for a treatment which would cost her close to Rs 25 lakh.

"As I speak the money is being transferred to her father's account," said filmmaker

Shashi Ranjan whose wife Anu Ranjan's NGO Beti raised funds for Sonali.

On April 22, 2003, the NCC cadet was subjected to an acid attack in the middle of the night by three young boys from her neighbourhood for complaining against their eve-teasing.

The then 18-year-old had suffered 70 per cent burn injuries, while her younger sister 20 per cent. Sonali lost complete vision in her right eye and can see light and movements only vaguely with the left eye. She lost her right ear and can hear partially with the left.

The first sitting of surgery of the seven planned surgeries was recently conducted at BLK Super Specialty Hospital where her treatment will continue for a year-and-a-half.

Dr Sanjeev Bagai, CEO, Radiant Life Care, informed that this is a highly complicated series of surgery.

"As donor tissues from both her thighs and arms have been consumed, we are using tissue expansion; and stem cell and fat transfer technology to treat her," said Dr Bagai.

"She has been through 21-22 surgeries in the past nine years when she was attacked. But the grafting has started to go away. We have planned to use new technology and methods for sustained treatment," said Dr A S Bath, head, department of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the hospital.

He said delay in first-aid and starting rest of the treatment procedure are the main culprits for the deteriorated condition of the 28-year-old girl.

"Neither the family, nor the dispensary she was rushed to poured enough water on her which is the first line of treatment for a burn victim. The acid kept burning her organs. She was given only medication for the next three months

whereas plastic surgery should have been started," said Dr Bath.

In the first sitting, which was conducted on August 27, right side of scalp was operated upon. A silicon balloon was placed and injected with saline.

"Skin grafting on her scalp gave way because there was no padding underneath. Through our procedure, she will get hair-bearing scalp," said Dr Bath.

Her eyelids were also operated upon. "She cannot shut her eyes due to missing skin. We grafted skin on her eyelid," said Dr Bath.

If she is not able to shut her eyes, then in due course of time she will lose even partial vision of left eye.

The next sitting is planned a month later in which the tightness of her neck will be released by grafting and ear drums will be operated.

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