



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayo Clinic announces successful face transplant on Wyoming man

Rochester, Minn - February 17, 2017 — A multidisciplinary team of surgeons, physicians and other health professionals recently completed a near-total face transplant on a Wyoming man on Mayo Clinic's Rochester campus. The extensive, life-changing surgery will improve the patient's ability to chew, swallow, speak, breathe and smell. The recipient, Andrew Sandness, is a 32-year-old man from eastern Wyoming whose face was devastated by a gunshot wound at the age of 21. He is doing well.

"I am absolutely amazed at the outcome so far," says Sandness. "I am now able to chew and eat normal food, and the nerve sensation is slowly improving, too. My confidence has improved, and I'm feeling great — and grateful. I am so thankful to my donor and the donor's family, and to all of the people who have supported me throughout this process."

The care team led by Samir Mardini, M.D., and Hatem Amer, M.D., the surgical director and medical director, respectively, for Mayo Clinic Essam and Dalal Obaid Center for Reconstructive Transplant Surgery. The team includes specialists from Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Transplant Medicine, Neurology, Ophthalmology, Dermatology, Radiology, Critical Care, Anesthesia, Psychiatry, Infectious Diseases, Immunology, Pharmacy, Regenerative Medicine, Nursing, Social Work, Rehabilitation, and Speech and Language Pathology. The team also includes staff from LifeSource, the federally-designated non profit organization dedicated to saving and healing lives through organ, eye and tissue donation in the Upper Midwest.

"Mayo Clinic has a long history of specialized teams of experts providing complex care to patients who need hope and healing," says Dr. Mardini. "This is an extraordinary example of the teamwork, collaboration and compassion that we provide at Mayo Clinic, and I couldn't be more proud of this team. Andy has been our patient for 10 years. He has worked so hard to prepare for this, and during his entire recovery period, he has been strong, gracious and determined. Andy is an amazing person and so well-deserving of this gift."

The surgery, which spanned more than 50 hours, occurred in the summer 2016 and involved restoring Sandness' nose, upper and lower jaw, palate, teeth, cheeks, facial muscles, oral mucosa, some of the salivary glands and the skin of the face (from below the eyelids to the neck and from ear to ear). The surgical team used virtual surgical planning technology and 3-D printing to optimize the aesthetic and functional outcomes of the surgery. Sandness has been recovering in Rochester and likely will return home to eastern Wyoming this month.

“We are grateful that the guiding principles of the Mayo Brothers have endured and shepherded the development of the Reconstructive Transplant program, and for Andy’s dedication to his medical care,” says Dr. Amer. “Throughout the entire journey, we have shared Andy’s concern and sympathy for the donor family who have made this amazing gift possible. Their selfless gift gives hope to so many other people who are living reclusively, have limited function, and are socially isolated due to facial deformities.”

The multidisciplinary team leaders for this project — all from Mayo Clinic — are:

- Samir Mardini, M.D., surgical director
- Hatem Amer, M.D., medical director
- Charles Rosen, M.D., director, Mayo Clinic Transplant Center
- Brooks Edwards, M.D., immediate past director, Mayo Clinic Transplant Center
- Sheila Jowsey-Gregoire, M.D., Transplant Psychiatry
- Kevin Reid, D.M.D., Bioethics
- Daniel Brown, M.D., Ph.D., Anesthesia/Critical Care
- Sharon Prinsen, M.S.N., R.N., N.E.A.-B.C., nursing administrator, Transplant
- Cheryl Weisbrod, R.N., N.E.-B.C., nursing administrator, Surgery
- Lori Ewoldt, M.A., administrator, Transplant Center
- Mark Dahl, CPP, Security
- Christopher Arendt, Pharm.D.

Facial transplantation is the process of removing part or all of a donor’s face and attaching it onto a patient who has previously suffered facial injury or deformity. Skin, fat, muscles, nerves, tendons, cartilage and bone may be components of the transplant. Attaching nerves and blood vessels from the donor’s face to the recipient’s provides the potential (with extensive rehabilitation) for sensation, function and mobility similar to an uninjured face. In some situations, it may allow the recipient to regain the ability to speak, chew food, avoid ongoing use of feeding tubes, and regain his or her sense of smell.

Mayo Clinic’s primary goal is to restore normal anatomy and improve function as much as possible. A secondary goal is to help patients achieve better social integration by improving their appearance and removing their facial deformity, giving them the confidence to live less reclusively and have a better quality of life. At Mayo Clinic, teams of experts focus on meeting the needs of each patient as a whole person, providing exactly the care he or she needs.

For more than 50 years, thousands of people have received organ, tissue and bone marrow transplants at Mayo Clinic, and Mayo Clinic has been on the forefront of reconstructive facial surgery since the 1930s. Mayo Clinic performs more transplants than any other institution in the nation. The face transplant program combines these long-standing areas of expertise to provide patients with peace of mind that Mayo Clinic has the capabilities and experience they need to have a successful outcome and improved quality of life.

The Mayo Clinic Essam and Dalal Obaid Center for Reconstructive Transplant Surgery is supported by a generous gift from Mr. Tarek Obaid and the Essam and Dalal Obaid Foundation in honor of the Obaid family's values — particularly hope — which they consider the most powerful emotion, providing the fortitude to persevere and the well from which people draw strength.

About Mayo Clinic

Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit organization committed to clinical practice, education and research, providing expert, whole-person care to everyone who needs healing. For more information, visit <http://www.mayoclinic.org/about-mayo-clinic> or <http://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/>.