

World tallest man finally stops growing, US doctors say

March 16 2012, by Robert MacPherson

Good news for Turkey's Sultan Kosen, at eight foot three (2.51 meters) the world's tallest living man: he can now say with confidence that he's finally grown up.

Nearly two years after gamma ray radiosurgery at the University of Virginia, doctors confirmed that Kosen, 29, has overcome acromegaly, a rare [hormonal disorder](#) that caused him to keep growing well into adulthood.

"He's stopped growing, which is good," said neurosurgeon Jason Sheehan, who performed the non-invasive procedure that zapped the troublesome [pituitary tumor](#) deep inside Kosen's brain with extreme precision.

"He will still have some medical therapy to deal with the excessive height he has achieved," Sheehan told AFP by telephone from the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"However, it is hopeful that he will not have any additional challenges because of continued growth."

Kosen now is traveling in Italy, where he "appears to be doing reasonably well" after recovering from previous thigh and hip fractures, said Sheehan, who spoke this week with the man's family and his Turkish endocrinologist.

Born into a farming family in Mardin, southeastern Turkey, Kosen gained global celebrity status in September 2009 when Guinness World Records declared him to be "the tallest man in the world."

He was then eight feet one inch (2.47 meters) tall.

"I never imagined I would be in the book," said Kosen when [Guinness World Records](#) introduced him to the global news media in the shadow of Tower Bridge in London. "I dreamed about it, but it was still a huge surprise."

He acknowledged he was handy at changing light bulbs and hanging drapes, but also frustrated at finding clothes -- at least before a London tailor fitted him with a made-to-measure pinstripe suit.

But as one of the very few humans ever to grow beyond eight feet -- the two tallest-ever [National Basketball Association](#) players, Manute Bol and Gheorghe Muresan, were seven foot seven (2.31 meters) -- he had unique medical issues.

He needed crutches to get around, and too much growth hormone wreaked havoc on his muscles, heart and other organs inside his lanky frame -- issues that Sheehan said should now give way to better overall health.

Acromegaly typically results from a benign tumor in the pea-sized pituitary gland at the base of the brain. Such a tumor can result in the production of too much growth hormone, leading in turn to gigantism, or excessive growth.

Kosen turned to the University of Virginia after two attempts in Turkey and elsewhere in Europe to surgically cut out the tumor, as well as conventional radiotherapy, failed to resolve the problem.

In August 2010, Sheehan and his team treated Kosen's tumor with a precisely targeted shot of extremely high frequency gamma rays, using a non-invasive radiosurgical device known as a Gamma Knife.

Kosen spent just a day and a half in hospital. But while the University of Virginia puts about 30 cases of acromegaly under its Gamma Knife every year, his record-setting proportions posed a special challenge.

"There is a stereotactic frame or 'halo' that goes around a patient's head... and his head was too big to fit into the ordinary one," Sheehan said, so a special adapter was ordered from Sweden's Elekta, which builds the Gamma Knife.

"While Mr Kosen is the tallest person, he is not unique," Sheehan said. "In terms of pituitary disorders, acromegaly is one of the more common disorders you can have. Obviously, Sultan had an extreme case of it."

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