

India's baby Roona discharged after surgeons shrink skull (Update)

August 2 2013, by Ammu Kannampilly

Doctors allowed a one-year-old Indian baby to go home Friday after nearly four months of treatment to correct a rare disorder that caused her head to double in size.

Roona Begum and her parents left New Delhi and headed home to a remote region of India's northeast after surgeons declared that her health had significantly improved.

Roona, whose plight captured international sympathy, has battled through several life-saving surgical procedures which saw doctors drain fluid from her head and dramatically reduce the size of her skull.

"Roona's health has improved significantly.... We have discharged the baby this morning and she is fit to travel," neurosurgeon Sandeep Vaishya said as the child left the private hospital on the outskirts of Delhi where she has been since April.

A drowsy-looking Roona was then driven with her smiling parents to Delhi airport, her first time out of a hospital gown in nearly four months.

Roona was born with hydrocephalus, a potentially fatal condition that causes cerebrospinal fluid to build up on the brain.

Her condition had caused her head to swell to a circumference of 94 centimetres (37 inches), putting pressure on her brain and making it impossible for her to sit upright or crawl.

Her head shrank to 58 centimetres after procedures conducted between April and July at the hospital run by the private Fortis Healthcare group.

Vaishya, who heads the hospital's neurosurgery unit, said he expected her head to shrink further after conducting a final surgery in about six months' time.

"When she came here, she was almost immobile. Now, she is moving her head from side to side easily, it shows that her neck muscles are already getting stronger," he said.

"The next big step will be for her to sit up.

"Neurologically as well the baby shows several signs of improvement. She can see better, her limb movements are much better," he added.

Although Roona's skull is likely to remain large compared with other children, she has a good chance of developing normally, provided her neck muscles can grow strong enough to support her head, he explained.

"Except for the size of her head, she is an absolutely normal baby. She eats without a problem and moves her arms and legs easily," he said.

Her 25-year-old mother, Fatema Khatun, said she was looking forward to taking the baby home to their village in the remote northeastern state of Tripura.

"Everyone at home is eagerly waiting to see Roona. Her grandparents were so happy when they heard we were coming home," Khatun told AFP ahead of their departure.

Roona's father, Abdul Rahman, 18, called her an "extraordinary" child.

"She is so strong, she has gone through so many surgeries and she is still here and she's in good spirits," Rahman told AFP.

Roona's parents were too poor to pay for treatment, but publication of pictures taken by an AFP photographer prompted the hospital to offer to treat her for free.

The photographs also triggered an outpouring of support worldwide, with prospective donors contacting AFP and other news organisations to enquire how they could contribute to a fund for her treatment.

Two Norwegian college students, Jonas Borchgrevink and Nathalie Krantz, started an online campaign that has raised \$58,000.

The campaign has paid around \$30,000 to the charitable arm of Fortis hospital, as the initially estimated cost of Roona's treatment multiplied by more than 30 times, Borchgrevink told AFP.

The donations have covered about half the total cost of treatment so far, with the rest paid by the hospital's charitable foundation.

"We still have around \$28,000 left, which we want to send to the family for her aftercare," Borchgrevink said.

"This is not a short-term project for us. We intend to follow up with the family in the coming years to ensure she gets the help she needs," he said.

Roona's mother Khatun said, "I will never meet all the people who have helped my child, but I want them to know that I am very very grateful to them."

The website for donations can be viewed at

www.mygoodact.com/collectionde...ailperson.php?id=212.

© 2013 AFP

Citation: India's baby Roona discharged after surgeons shrink skull (Update) (2013, August 2) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-baby-swollen-discharged-indian-hospital.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.