

Rare surgery restores normal eyelid function to 6-yr-old

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EVERY time six-year-old Suraj Shivale took up his books, one of his hands automatically touched his forehead—not because he was irritated with studies but because he had to manually lift one of his eyelids that would otherwise remain shut.

Suraj's condition became a barrier to getting admission in an English medium school. Now, after the restoration of his eyelid movement, Suraj's parents are hopeful that he can go to school and lead a life like a

normal kid. Suraj, who goes to anganwadi with his four-year-old brother Akash in Sangli, was born with a condition that is relatively rare and is known as Congenital Fibrosis of Extra Ocular Muscle (CFEOM). His eyelids drooped since birth, and he used his thumb to lift it. His eyeballs were static and he had to move his head to see at the sides.

"Since the age of three months, he lifted his eyelids with the help of his thumb to play with his toys. When he was one and-a-half-years-old, he underwent a surgery for raising the eyelids with the help of sutures but it had a temporary ef-



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Suraj Shivale

fect as the stitches connecting the eyelid to the forehead muscle did not hold for long," said Kishor, Suraj's father.

Around six months back, Suraj was detected with night blindness at the Hinduja hospital where he was brought after the first surgery failed. "In such cases, either we stitch the eyelids to the eyebrow or

put a silicon band to connect the eyelid to the forehead muscle but in this case it did not work. We decided to use a part of the thigh muscle to connect the eyelid to the forehead," said Dr Ashwin Sainani, pediatric ophthalmologist at Hinduja hospital.

This surgery, called Frontalis Sling using fascial latta, is more permanent since the tissue used is from the patient's own body. "The leg scar heals perfectly with no problems in walking and the eyelids can now open by raising the eyebrow. This surgery is considered the gold standard in treating drooping eyelids

but rarely done in conditions of congenital fibrosis coupled with night blindness," added Dr Sainani.

"He never complained of headache or pain in the eye," said Rajshree, Suraj's mother. Suraj was operated 15 days back with monetary concessions as his father, a farmer, could not manage to collect money for the surgery that costs between Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000.

Dr Sahani, however, admitted that not much could be done about the immobility of the eyeball, nor could his night blindness be cured, a problem that will continue to for the rest of his life. "In this condition, the muscle in

the fibrosis tissues that lose the ability to contract and relax. CFEOM is usually associated with drooping eyelids. There are other diseases like mental retardation and obesity that are also associated with CFEOM," said Dr Shalini-Kaul, squint specialist at Aditya Jyot Eye hospital.

Though the correct incidence is not known till date, paediatric ophthalmologists across the city agree that it is a relatively rare condition. "We get six to seven such cases a year because there is a separate squint specialty at the hospital," said Dr Kaul.

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