

HENRY E.



Henry is a 37-year-old forensic mental health nurse working in London. He lives with his wife Gloria and their six-year-old son Jeremiah.

Henry's story starts in Nigeria in 1991 where he underwent several operations culminating in the removal of all his right upper jaw and maxillary sinus for what was thought to be a benign tumor.

He wrote Iain Hutchison in the UK asking him to reconstruct the defects left by this surgery in Nigeria and was advised that he would need to raise funds for his hospital treatment even though the surgeon's and anesthetist's fees would be waived. With the help of friends, family and his employer, Henry raised enough funds to pay for his travel, hospital and accommodation bills.

By the time Henry arrived in the UK in 1991 the malignant cartilage tumor, a chondrosarcoma, was growing at four separate sites: the roof of his nose and bulging out through the right side of his nose; behind his right eye pushing this forward; in his right cheekbone, and in his right temple, destroying the skull and facial bones at these sites.

Henry was immediately treated with chemotherapy for six months. Because of the position of the tumor a huge amount of his face needed to be excised to achieve its total removal. He underwent a twenty-three hour operation in which his nose, right face including skin and underlying bone, right eye, right temple, and the bones separating his brain from his eye socket and nose were removed. This area was built up using rib to reconstruct the underlying facial architecture, latissimus dorsi muscle from the back to seal the space between the brain and the mouth, and skin from the back to replace lost facial skin. After this he received a six-week radiotherapy course. The tumor recurred five years later, in 1996, on the left side of his upper jaw. On this occasion Henry's left upper jaw, sinus and nasal support were removed.

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When Mark Gilbert met Henry, the tumor had recurred on the left side of his skull, and in his left zygoma (cheekbone) and eye socket. These areas were removed (preserving his only eye – the left one) and reconstructed using a left scapular microvascular bone and skin flap.

Henry is well and continuing to lead a full life. He has earned postgraduate degrees and works as a psychiatric nurse. He asked to be painted with his son Jeremiah who is his pride and joy and, incidentally, a testament to his continuing vitality and his successful battle with this tumor.