

A New Smile for Joshua

Apr 28, 2021 · By CURE International · [Patient Stories](#)



Filipinos are known to be very happy, smiling people. In fact, [our country was recently ranked 52nd happiest country in the world](#) and tagged as the [selfie capital in the world](#) back in 2014. Despite our love for smiling and selfies, our country has also one of the highest incidences of cleft lip and palate, a condition affecting one's smile and facial appearance. In fact, about 2 out of 1,000 Filipino babies are born with cleft lip and palate.

Joshua, a 15-year-old boy, is one of the children with this condition. He had lip surgery done when he was just three years old. However, his second surgery for his palate got postponed due to frequent colds since his open lip and palate make him more susceptible to infection. Since then, his family never brought him back to the hospital. As Joshua started going to school, it was difficult to find the right time to pull him out of class to undergo surgery.

Joshua's self-esteem has been greatly affected growing up with an untreated palate because of how different he sounds when he speaks. "I am not confident when I speak. There was one time when I had to ride the jeepney (public bus) alone, without my friends, and I had to talk to the passenger next to me to hand my payment to the driver. When I got to my destination, I had to talk out loud to call the driver's attention. It was very embarrassing because almost everyone in the jeepney stared at me," Joshua shares.

Thankfully, Joshua's family learned about CURE through a friend at church who connected them to our partner organization, Seeds of Dignity. Joshua underwent palate repair in May 2020. Joshua received follow-up treatment, as well as surgery, which included speech therapy. Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon Andrew Hodges explained how crucial long-term treatment is for cleft patients. "After the surgery, children heal really quickly. However, complete healing takes longer. We want to hear [the child speak] and see if there are any issues that might need speech therapy or further surgery. There are many procedures that may need to be done later on," he explains.



“What I like about the Tebow CURE Hospital is that they share God’s word and pray for their patients before surgery.” - Joshua

Our aim to provide long-term, holistic treatment to patients, and so we partnered with [Smile Train](#) to offer Joshua speech therapy sessions. Upon assessment, the medical team decided another procedure was needed to correct the structure of Joshua’s palate in order for him to create certain sounds. Joshua had his second corrective palate surgery. Although he is still on his healing journey, **he looks forward to finally being able to speak confidently and sing a worship song in church someday!**

Patients like Joshua no longer need to look to other places for follow-up care. They receive the best result possible with a sustainable treatment plan now made available here at the CURE Children’s Hospital of the Philippines. It is our prayer to serve more Filipino kids like Joshua, giving them renewed smiles and hope!