

Separated Filipino Twins Return Home After Successful Surgery

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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On August 18, two Filipino twins returned home with their mother after being separated in a seven-hour operation and three months of recuperation at the foundation's [Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center](#). It was the ninth such separation performed by surgeons in Taiwan, the second case in Tzu Chi hospital, and the first involving twins joined at the anus. The operation has transformed the lives of the twins, enabling them to be like normal children for the first time.

Rose Carmel and Rose Carmelette Molit arrived in Taiwan on March 31. At birth, the twins were joined at the spine, sharing an area 36 centimeters in circumference, including about 2.5 centimeters of entangled nerves that created a Y-shape at the base of their backs. The operation was a complicated and dangerous procedure, requiring a medical team of 20 people, who reviewed every step of the procedure and met 10 times before confirming that the girls were healthy enough to attempt it.



On April 8, before the operation could be attempted, the girls underwent tissue enlargement procedures, had a second anus and bladder created and underwent ultrasonic examinations. The medical team practiced on special surgical dolls. Peng Haiqi, director of pediatric surgery at the hospital, said: "By the time we did the trial surgeries, we had already decided on all the different techniques. We were clear on every step of the procedure and had done a thorough evaluation."

The operation began at 0918 on June 5, when Peng made the first cut. After removing the tissue enlargement device, surgical teams took over and began the most difficult part of the procedure. Then neurological specialists helped to separate the spine; then the surgeons took over again, separating the anus, the colon and the perineum. The separation procedure took a total of four and a half hours.



For the final step, cosmetic surgeons worked to cover the children's scars. By 1645, the procedure was complete after seven long hours; for everyone - mother, medical staff and volunteers – it was the end of a long ordeal and they could breathe, their tension relieved.

When the two girls woke up after the operation, they suddenly found themselves different to what they had been before. It was an uneasy feeling, according to Lin Meifen, deputy head nurse at the hospital's pediatric centre: "After separation, children who once shared a single body feel very insecure. It is a completely new feeling for them. They sleep a little, then wake up suddenly, as if half of them has gone missing - and start to cry."

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For the staff at the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, it was the second operation to separate conjoined twins and the first in which they were joined at the pelvis. For the first time, the girls were able to turn themselves over and soon would be taking their first steps into the wide world as individual persons. Zhang Ruizhen, a doctor at the pediatrics department, said that, for the girls, an early separation was a very good thing, in terms of development or maturity. "Obviously, their development will be better, because by their sixth or seventh month they will be able to sit up - and on their own. This gives them more opportunity for exercise and stimulation, so they will eat and digest better, as well."



The two girls arrived in Taiwan with their mother Emile on March 31 this year. It was their first visit to a strange country, in which they could not speak the language, for a complex operation whose successful outcome could not be guaranteed. They were full of fear and anxiety. The doctors, nurses and volunteers at the hospital did everything to make them feel welcome and have a sense of belonging. They decorated the girls' room with colorful toys and other things to use, like a stroller, and provided powdered milk formula. The twins found the hot, humid summer weather hard to bear. Emile asked the volunteers for help; they provided muslin to use as swaddling. Tzu Chi volunteer Zhang Jixue said that Emile worked so hard: "She washes their diapers until they are pure white. She's incredible. She washes them all by hand and hangs them to dry."



With the girls weighing in at eight kilos, a nutritionist took care of their diet. Nurses cut their hair several times during the summer; everyone cared for the children as if they were their own. Emile was at the side of her daughters every minutes; she kept a diary during her visit and often wrote to her family at home. Volunteer Li Jianlan said that Emile wrote many letters so that her family would know how the family was while she was here. "They were far away in the Philippines, so she needed to fill them in."

After four months away, Emile really missed her home and family. When she knew the date of her return, she eagerly telephoned her family with the good news. Her face that was filled with trepidation and worry when she arrived was transformed into joy. "The Tzu Chi volunteers are kind, very kind," she said.

Before they left Hualien, the hospital staff held a farewell celebration for Mother and her two daughters, preparing a cake to send them off. Then the three visited [Master Cheng Yen](#) at the Jing Si Abode. One of the girls sat comfortably in the arms of Master Cheng Yen. She gave them her blessing and reminded Emile to take extra care of their health. She presented a gift of a red envelope, as a symbol of this blessing and with her hope that the twins will grow up happy

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and healthy when they return home.

Emile's eyes were filled with tears of joys. She simply could not put her gratitude into words and looked forward to a bright future ahead.