

What is Cervical Dystonia

● Cervical Dystonia, or spasmodic torticollis, is focal dystonia characterized by neck muscles contracting involuntarily, causing abnormal movements and awkward posture of head and neck

● Spasms in muscles or pinched nerves in neck can result in considerable pain and discomfort

● If contractions are sustained, they may cause abnormal posture of head and neck

● One of the most effective treatments for Cervical Dystonia is botulinum toxin (or botox) injections to affected muscles

Surgery Procedure

- 12-cm incision was made at back of neck and doctors reached between muscle plains
- With help of intra-operative nerve stimulator, nerve branches supplying blood to spasmodic muscles were identified
- Stimulation was given to muscles with a strong current to ensure muscles do not contract
- Nerves were then cut, so that blood supply to spasmodic muscles is stopped
- Procedure was repeated for two other nerve routes inside spinal cord
- Muscles in front area of opposite side of neck were then disconnected
- Six nerve routes and two muscles were disconnected



In This Case

Spasms started in the neck in the case of Ganesh Chile

His neck would turn to right and no matter how much he tried, it wouldn't turn back

He lived with disability for almost three years and tried various treatments

It was due to spasms in deep cervical muscles, associated with rotation and neck movement

56-year-old now looks at life with head held high

Pratibha Masand | TNN

For almost three years, 56-year-old Ganesh Chile (name changed) put his life in danger by going to work. Surprisingly, Chile didn't have any other means of transport except for his scooter. Chile would sometimes start getting spasms in his neck and it would turn to one side and refuse to return to normal.

The Thane resident was suffering from Cervical Dystonia, in which neck muscles contract involuntarily and no matter how hard you try, they don't relax. Because of this, Chile had a permanent contraction in his right shoulder, which would move up and the neck would be only on the right.

"He got the problem in 2008," said Abha, his wife. "He had put on a neck belt but used to get only support from it. It did nothing to make his neck move to the front," she said. The family consulted many doctors but all said there was no per-

manent cure.

Chile also took botulinum toxin (or botox) injections, which gave him relief for a few days but burnt a big hole in his pockets. "I had taken four sessions of botulinum shots. The injections were very costly and even stopped affecting my neck muscles," said Chile.

Last September, when Chile went to Jaslok Hospital, a doctor told him that there may be a cure. Dr Paresh Doshi, a consultant neurosurgeon at the hospital, said Chile was suffering from a problem prevalent in 6-12 per lakh population. "Cervical Dystonia is a characteristic of age. It is not very common in people aged below 30," he said.

In Chile's case, Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) was an option. "We have treated dystonia cases with DBS, but Chile couldn't afford it. So we thought of going in for cervical rhizotomy, a much complicated method which was performed for the first time in India by us for this problem," said Dr Doshi.

In a surgery in December, with the help of intra-operative monitoring devices, doctors identified the nerves supplying blood to those muscles which were giving Chile a problem. "The muscles stretched from below the earlobe to the shoulder. We then reached between muscle plains and cut the blood connection to those muscles which were spasmodic. We then had to repeat the procedure within the spinal canal. And then we had to denervate the muscles in the front of the neck," said Dr Doshi, adding that within a week of surgery, Chile was showing 50% improvement.

Chile can now look at life with his head held high. He still gets minor spasms sometimes but doesn't get his neck stuck in an odd position anymore. "I feel much better and confident now. I can go back to my work and social life without feeling disabled," said Chile, who has two grown-up daughters and a teenaged son.