



Biggest tumour, youngest patient

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IT was the biggest tumour of this type that he had ever seen.

Dr Timothy Lee also said Asir was the youngest patient he has operated on for such tumours.

'His tumour was huge. It was about 10cm across and about the size of a tennis ball, sitting in the middle of the brain,' said Dr Lee in an interview with The New Paper.

He told Asir's parents a two-stage operation from two different directions would be needed to take it out.

'With this kind of tumour, the only chance is a near total or total excision (removal),' said Dr Lee.

After the two operations, Asir suffered some complications due to a treatment done before coming here.

Dr Lee had to do three more minor operations, including inserting tubes to continue draining the excess fluid build-up in his brain.

Overall, Dr Lee is very happy with the result of the operation.

'There's just a tiny bit of tumour left, which is stuck to the hypothalamus and which would have been too dangerous to remove. That's why we need chemotherapy,' said Dr Lee.

Because much of the tumour involved the optical nerve that controls the right eye - that nerve could not be saved.

'If I had left that alone, too much tumour would have been left behind and there would have been a risk to his life,' said Dr Lee.

But Asir's other optical nerve is intact.

After the operation, when Dr Lee performed the blink test by moving a finger quickly towards his

eye, Asir reacted and blinked.

'Initially he was also able to stare at the TV.

'But the water retention problem may have caused some stretching of the nerve, which affected his eyesight.

'Hopefully now that the water retention problem is under control, his optical nerve may recover and he may regain sight in that eye,' said Dr Lee.

Normally, surgeons treat this type of tumour, known as pilocytic astrocytoma, aggressively.

'The outcome is very good if we can remove all of the tumour,' he said.

He said he has treated similar cases.

'Eight, nine years later, most of those children are well,' he said.

Asir is also being looked after by an oncologist, an endocrinologist and a paediatrician.

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