

## Sebina From Uganda

Two years ago, I decided it was time for me to have orthognathic surgery (OGS), a project that had been shelved for about seven years. Unfortunately, for seven years, I had not met a surgeon to guide me on the latest practice in the profession. All I had at the time was reports from the Oral surgeon in Uganda who had treated me for a capillary haemangioma 25 years ago, and from German surgeons who I consulted in 1989 when my parents noticed the change in my facial profile that was caused as a result of the trauma suffered after excision of the haemangioma.

There were two options. The first was Germany, but I knew the cost would be prohibitive. My second option was South Africa. I visited South Africa in 1998 and had been examined by a maxillofacial surgeon. He gave me a quotation, which I felt was more reasonable.

Around that time, my dentist introduced me to Dr. Adrienne Kamulegeya, a maxillofacial surgeon at Mulago national referral Hospital in Uganda. Adrienne had spent some time at Chang Gung hospital in Taiwan and had photos taken during surgeries on his laptop, which he shared with me.

After studying my profile, he gave me a detailed explanation of what the surgery entails, and did not hesitate to highlight the risks involved. He informed me that Taiwan surgeons were the best at this kind of surgery due to the high number of malocclusions in South East Asia. He further explained that what made them so good was the number of surgeries they performed.

It was during that meeting that the name Yu- Ray Chen first came up.

We parted ways after exchanging phone contacts. I called him again after a month and made an appointment to see him at his private clinic. He told me I would need orthodontic evaluation and preparation before surgery. He referred me to an orthodontist called Aisha Bataringaya Sekalala, who, by coincidence, had spent some time in Taiwan training

under the guidance of Professor Shing Huang.

The orthodontist reviewed my medical history. She took x-rays and models. We discussed surgery options in South Africa and Taiwan. We decided to give South Africa priority because of proximity to Uganda. Besides, I would not have to spend so much on an air ticket.

She established contact with her colleagues in South Africa, but they did not get back to us, even after incessant reminders.

I was disappointed, but she told me to take heart, and advised that the Taiwan surgeons would work on me better probably at the same cost provided I could spend extra on an air ticket. By January 2011, I had locked onto Taiwan.

Dr. Bataringaya communicated with Professor Huang by email, copying me in on a regular basis. Professor Huang linked me to the International Service Center (ISC) of Chang Gung Memorial Hospital.

I conducted a google search of the hospital, Professor Chen and Professor Huang, to satisfy myself that I was in good hands. The literature was impressive.

I received regular communication by way of email from the ISC. They sent me a form to fill regarding my medical history, and received regular updates. Surgery was originally to be performed mid 2011, but I realised that was the middle of the year and would lose time away from work, so I requested that it be performed towards the end of the year.

Orthodontic preparation commenced in May 2011, and by June, we had set 21st November 2011 as the date for surgery. The ISC booked a hotel for me, sent me an invitation letter to present for my VISA, and also sent me caring tips about the basics in Taiwan like weather, voltage, exchange rates, where to get pre-paid sim cards, to mention but a few.

The days went by so fast, before I knew it was November. I postponed my departure by a day to enable me finalise the numerous assignments I had taken on before. I did not communicate this to the ISC. On the 9th

day of November 2011 (8.00pm Ugandan time, 1.00am Taiwan time), I received a call from Becky Chuang of the ISC. She introduced herself and asked what had gone wrong, why I had not arrived as planned, and that she was worried something had gone wrong? I explained that I had to adjust my schedule to accommodate work, and then there were no flights the following day.

I departed on the 11th day of November 2011, and arrived in Taiwan on 13th November 2011. I spent the first day in bed recovering from the twenty hour journey from Entebbe to Taoyuan and disorientation resulting from flying across several time zones.

Having fully recovered, I woke up early on day two eager to have a heavy breakfast. I had last eaten about 30 hours earlier on the Cathay Pacific flight from Hong Kong to Taiwan and my stomach was rumbling. My appetite was upset when I got down to the restaurant. It was not the usual continental or English style breakfast associated with hotels I had stayed at. On the menu was tea, coffee, rice porridge, spinach mixed with carrots, sugar coated shredded beef, bread, muffins, and many other foods I could not identify, meticulously cut into small pieces. The food was not served hot and there were no warmers. No sign of forks and knives, just chopsticks and plastic spoons. I stood confused for about one minute before the chef came and spoke to me in mandarin, which got me more confused, Other people in the restaurant (all locals) seemed to be enjoying their breakfast, and using chopsticks looked easy, so I decided to give it a shot.

The starter was rice porridge, which went well as I used a plastic spoon. The rest was a disaster. I had attempted using chopsticks at a Chinese restaurant in Uganda before, but put them away because there was the option of a fork and knife. I was now faced with a situation where there was no option. It was a disaster. The food kept slipping through the chopsticks however much I tried, much to the amusement of one gentleman seated at the next table, who came over to illustrate how they should be used.

After five minutes, I went in for coffee and chocolate muffin, after which I returned to my room.

First on my list of priorities was purchasing a pre-paid sim card and calling Becky to let her know the number on which I could be reached. It was cheaper that way as the hotel charged dearly for using the in-house phone.

The receptionist directed me to a 7-Eleven store where I purchased a sim card, and spent the rest of the morning, and part of early afternoon walking around Linko. Taiwanese speak mandarin and my first challenge was communication. Save for the “Nee-how” greeting, I could not say anything else and resorted to sign language, which worked very well for me.

People were shy but quite friendly and would help me find someone conversant with English to assist with directions whenever I asked. It was common to ask where I came from. Uganda was not a country they had heard of. Some asked whether it was near India or in South Africa, much to my amusement. Others thought I was an African-American basketball player on holiday.

I met Becky on the 3rd day of my stay in Taiwan. We had spoken on phone a day earlier and she proposed that we meet in front of the Children’s’ hospital at the Linko branch at 10.00am.

Becky showed up at 9.57am. Being the only black man around made me instantly recognisable. It was a pleasure to finally meet someone I had exchanged so many emails with. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, she led me into the building and into a physician’s office. The latter asked me a few questions about my past and gave a go-ahead for the self blood donation.

After the self blood donation, Becky and I got onto the shuttle bus to the Taoyuan branch. She deposited the surgery fees at the reception while I simply sat waiting. That was it for my first appointment.

The next day, I was scheduled to meet Professor Huang, Professor Chen and the anaesthesiologist.

The first meeting was supposed to be at 9.00am. Becky turned up at 9.04am and apologised for being four minutes late. I was touched!

I met Professor Huang first. Becky did the introduction, just like she had done for all the hospital staff that worked on me. He conducted a physical examination, took my impressions after which he sent me for x-rays, 2D and 3D photography, ending with a neurosensitivity test. He had a good sense of humour, which was relaxing from my point of view. I did not feel like I was in a hospital. I was impressed with the standards and speed at which we managed to do and accomplish what he had ordered. The hospital staff worked with precision, urgency and purpose. When we were done, he sent me to meet Professor Chen.

I was anxious to meet Professor Chen, having heard so much about him. When the door opened, I was ushered in by one of his assistants. He needed no introduction. I could see his name emblazoned on the white clinical coat. Unlike Professor Huang, who conducted a physical examination that involved touching and opening my mouth while in a dental chair, all we did with Professor Chen was talk. In fact, there was no dental chair in that consultation room.

It was a question and answer session. This meeting was critical, for the decision whether surgery could be performed, would be made by Professor Chen. He asked the questions in a calm and composed manner, I provided the answers. Neither his tone, nor facial expression changed. He took me through the risks/complications involved in this surgery (Dr. Kamulegeya had explained these 18 months earlier) and without rushing me, ensured that I understood the same.

He finally asked why surgery could not be performed in Uganda, and my response was we did not have the facilities and know how, but also because Taiwan surgeons were internationally renowned for performing OGS. "Well, I hope we can be of service and that you like the results." That statement was followed by a smile.

When we were done with the discussion, I signed a consent form on which he had already endorsed his signature. By appending my signature, it meant the surgeon had explained the nature of surgery and that I

understood the same, together with all the possible risks and /or complications. This meant he had given a green light that surgery would be performed.

I met Professor Huang again in the afternoon and he advised that there would be a meeting with the surgeon later in the day to discuss aspects of the surgery. I was to meet him again after 2 days.

It was then time to meet the anaesthesiologist. His room was not far away from the craniofacial center. Unlike the surgeon and orthodontist who asked many questions, he did not talk much. He examined my neck and asked me to open my mouth. He explained what his role would be during surgery and after effects of the anaesthetist drugs. He also instructed me not to take in any food or drink for 12 hours preceding surgery. I signed a consent form and left. Becky escorted me to the exit of the building where I boarded the bus back to Linko.

I spent Friday touring Taipei, making an attempt to go to all the places in the tourist guide Becky had provided. I was determined to go to Taipei 101 despite the foggy conditions that day. The view from the 89th floor allowed me to see Taiwan airport and the new Taiwan city from one side, and part of the old city and forest on the other side. It was simply breathtaking. I got by despite not speaking mandarin as people always helped out whenever I asked. On the odd occasion, I would call up Becky for directions.

While in line to exit Taipei 101, two female university students visiting from mainland China looked at me with interest. I waved to them and one of them using sign language requested to have a photograph taken with me. I obliged and saw her celebrating with her friend. Her friend also requested to take a photo when we got to the ground floor, I felt like a celebrity. The lift could only accommodate 30 people at a time, which meant I had to wait for the excited ladies when I got to the ground floor.

Two minutes later the lady turned up, followed by 13 others. I took a photo with each one, and then we had a group photo taken by their guide. The young ladies were so excited, and I also enjoyed the celebrity status.

I was supposed to meet Becky at the craniofacial center at 9.00am on Saturday morning. Unfortunately, I woke up at 8.50am and ran to the bathroom. Becky called me at one minute after 9.00am. I was quite embarrassed, but explained that I would be with her shortly. I got to the hospital twenty minutes after 9.00am.

Professor Huang took me through what surgery would entail and my possible facial profile after the procedure. It looked impressive. He also told me to rest as much as possible before surgery. The meeting lasted about 15 minutes. As Becky walked me to the shuttle bus, she reiterated Professor Huang's advice that I should rest as much as possible before surgery scheduled to be performed two days later, and further reminded me about the need to keep time, "Monday, no late." She said, with emphasis.

I visited Taipei Zoo on and the Maokang gondola on Sunday afternoon. The panoramic view of dense forest and rolling hills was occasionally interrupted by jerking as the cable car stopped or accelerated, or when it was blown by increasing gusts of wind as evening approached. One hour later, I was back at the zoo entrance, glad to be back on my feet, but hungry and terribly cold. After eating at the Macdonald's adjacent to the Zoo gate, my next stop was Nanjing East road from where I would walk to Taipei Chang Gung hospital to catch the bus back to Linko.

I had to eat and drink again before midnight, so I went to a local 24 hour Chinese restaurant just opposite Chang Gung Linko branch. The food there was great, and my chopstick skills were improving by the day.

I packed my belongings and checked out of the hotel in the morning. With a few belongings, I made my way to Taoyuan branch, and arrived at 9.50am. Becky came down to meet me with Eunice, who she said worked with her at the ISC. We stopped at the 7-Eleven store and health shop on ground floor to buy milk, juice, tissues, tooth brushes and a few other items I would need to use during my stay at hospital. I later discovered that the hospital provided all the items we had purchased downstairs, save for milk and juice.

I was taken to a spacious room on the fifth floor, with a large window. Even before I got comfortable, Becky reminded me that we had to go see Professor Chen for final discussion before my surgery “later in the afternoon”.

For the meeting, I was taken to another room, not the consultation room that had been used for our previous meeting. I got seated, and Professor Chen walked in one minute later, followed by two other junior surgeons. They were clad in green “theatre pyjamas” complete with hair caps. In his hand, he had the tracings and drawings Professor Huang had discussed with me at his office two days earlier. He asked whether I had any special desire for my facial appearance. I answered in the negative. At this point my concern was pain after surgery. When I put the question to him, he simply said, “Yes, it will be a bit uncomfortable, but not very painful.” I thought he was telling a lie but at this point, did not have much to say to him. I knew he was trying to be nice and comfort me before surgery. It was a special moment in my life, a moment I had waited on for a long time.

After our brief discussion, Professor Chen said, “Okay, we are ready for you. We shall start as soon as you return from your room”. Now that sent a chill down my spine. It was D-day and was going to be sliced! Becky and Eunice took me to a waiting room and we sat on a round table. Anxiety set in, and suddenly started feeling cold. Becky asked the nursing staff to get me something to cover myself. Fifteen seconds later one of the nurses returned with warm, thick green sheets and covered me. One of the nurses spoke to Becky and Eunice in mandarin. When she was done, Becky informed me that a catheter would be inserted to help me relieve myself as I would not be allowed to move immediately after surgery. Now, that terrified me. I asked whether it hurt. Her response was that I should not worry as that would be done when I fell asleep.

Becky asked me whether I wanted to return to the room upstairs and rest a bit before surgery. “What for? It is like postponing the inevitable” I replied. One of the nurses handed me a pair of cream pyjamas. It was time to go and change my clothes. Upon my return, I handed over all my belongings to Becky. She was keen on counting the money I had, but that was not my priority at the time. She insisted, and put my effects away in

different polythene bags.

One more instruction before surgery, I had to be taken for x-ray on another floor to determine whether I had pneumonia. We returned to the waiting room and two nurses appeared. They asked me to tell them my name, date of birth and what type of surgery was going to be performed on me.

Becky told me this was to confirm that they would be working on the right person. After my response, the nurses told me they would call my name out after surgery and I would have to acknowledge by raising my hand. It was time for me to go. Becky and Eunice wished me good luck, and the two nurses led me to theatre, one holding each hand on either side. I felt powerless, like a convict sandwiched between two police officers being whisked off to a prison cell! My superior height and size made no difference. The nurses had in a subtle but unequivocal way made it clear to me that they were in control from this point onwards.

The sliding door closed as fast as it had opened. There were about four other nurses all clad in green “pyjamas”. I recognised the anaesthesiologist who asked me to lay down so he could put me to sleep. The prick made me grimace as the anaesthesiologist talked me through what his role would be during surgery.

Everything was happening so fast. I had only arrived at hospital less than one hour earlier, but now preparations were underway to have me “sliced”. Professor Chen walked in, with a smile on his face. The drug started taking effect and one of the nurses brought a breathing mask close to my nose. Five of the nurses formed a circle, held their right hands together in the middle and energetically indulged in a chant in unison for about five seconds, ending with a high five. Professor Chen looked on with a smile. I asked him what that was and his response was, “It is a time out to get them mentally prepared for surgery”.

Before I knew, someone was calling out my name and asking me to raise my hand. “Muwanga, Muwanga, please raise your hand. Surgery finished.” My response was slow, like that of a man being woken from deep slumber. It felt like I had only been asleep for 2 minutes, but she

was actually right, they were through with the procedure. I could not open my eyes, but remember the theatre staff checking my blood pressure, and then struggling to move my 98 kilogramme body from the theatre bed to the trolley. There is no recollection of what happened next, but I was finally alone in my room on the fifth floor. I felt very exhausted and drifted in and out of sleep. Save for a little light getting in from the corridor through a ventilation gap above the door, my room was dark. I could not move, and my arms and shoulders ached like I had just come out of an intensive aerobics session. I had lost track of time and felt so lazy, weak and stiff, could not move an inch.

One of the ward nurses came in to check my blood pressure and temperature. I remember faintly that she asked me a few questions, demanding answers. I asked her to get me the pen and piece of paper we had strategically placed on the right hand side of my bed. I lazily scribbled, "Go away, tired, want to sleep". She placed a tube blowing oxygen on my chest as I was breathing through the mouth mostly, and left shortly thereafter.

Throughout the night, nurses walked in and out of the room, checking my temperature, blood pressure, checking that the oxygen tube was in place and replacing the emptied bag containing a clear fluid that was flowing into my body through an intravenous line.

Early in the morning, one of the junior surgeons came into the room. He informed me that it was time to remove the draining tubes from the surgical sites. "Okay Muwanga, please take a deep breath" he advised. The pain was brief as he pulled the left one, followed by the right one.

It was then time to remove the catheter. Now I was really scared. I mobilised all the energy my body could provide at the time and asked "Is that going to hurt". He replied in the negative but added that I would feel a bit uncomfortable. It took him less than ten seconds to remove the tubes and tapes around my left thigh. One of the nurses walked in, to do what they had been doing all night....check my temperature and blood pressure. Meanwhile, the junior surgeons informed me that Professor Chen would be coming over later to check on me.

Ten minutes later, Professor Chen walked in with three Junior surgeons, including the one who had been with me earlier. I was anxious to know how the procedure had gone, but had no energy to speak so I scribbled on a piece of paper, "How did surgery go?" His response was, it went very well, just as planned. I scribbled again "On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate success?" His response was 9.8. I finally scribbled "Did I lose a lot of blood?" He consulted one of the junior surgeons who added that I lost some but not a substantial amount. He informed me that I would breathe through my mouth for a while as the swelling would not permit me to breathe through the nose. The air passage was dry and it felt uncomfortable.

He informed me that I would start swelling that day as swelling starts within 24 hours of surgery and subsides after 48 hours. He asked whether I had any more questions, I shook my head and he led his team out, promising to return the next day.

One of the nurses returned she asked "Okay?", I responded by raising my thumb. She signalled that it was time for me to drink something. I was limited to a liquid diet. The menu had two items, milk and juice. She opened the refrigerator, pulled out a packet of banana flavoured milk and asked "Okay?" I responded by raising my thumb.

She opened one syringe and added a small plastic tube. That is exactly how I was going to feed for the next four days....by way of a syringe. She also gave me some medicine...a yellow tablet was crushed, mixed with water and fed to me through another syringe.

The milk tasted great. It was time to brush my teeth, and this was not something I was looking forward to in my condition. The nurse said "Okay now brush" before placing two large mineral water bottles on the over bed table and asking me to hold a plastic tray just below my lower lip. She used another syringe to flush water into my mouth about three times then got a toothbrush and paste. She was going to do it herself but requested (by way of gesture) that I do it myself for fear of being hurt. "Okay" she responded, and handed me the toothbrush. Brushing my teeth was an elaborate affair. What made it cumbersome was that I was very weak and could hardly open my mouth. Besides, I was scared of

hurting myself. She would encourage me to spit and rest whenever I felt tired, resuming after 20 to 40 seconds. She ensured that I got to all the critical areas before she started flushing all angles of my mouth with water through the syringe. I wished I could tell her to stop at the time because I was already exhausted. Brushing had taken about 15 minutes so far and there was no indication that we were about to stop.

When the tray filled up, she held it and said "Not clear, again". She emptied the tray in the bathroom and returned for another flushing round. This process was repeated until the water flushed out of my mouth was clear. I lost count of the number of times as it was tiring, but the nurse did not relent and was in no mood to give up. Finally she was satisfied, but now had to flush my mouth with Parmasons solution, after which she put away the tray and mineral water bottles, wiped my face and chest with a piece of cloth, cleaned my nose, packed ice on either side of my head, positioned the oxygen tube, ensured I was comfortable before asking, "Okay?". I responded by raising my thumb, and she left.

In the early afternoon of day two, Eunice came to my room. She asked how I was doing, and like I had done with the nurses, raised my thumb. She informed me that a nurse called Theresa would be coming to check on me, and that Theresa had worked with many OGS patients so she would ensure that everything was going as planned. When Eunice left, I wondered why Becky had not come to see me, considering that she was my chaperone, had been with me at all times in hospital prior to surgery and had escorted me to all parts of the hospital (except the gents and x-ray room).

Nurse Theresa showed up in the evening of day two, after I had been fed. She was more articulate in the English language than all the other nurses and was a no-nonsense lady. Her primary interest was the condition of my mouth, and whether I had coughed and spat to clear my throat of any blood. She also advised me to start moving my jaw in order to exercise the muscles.

She took responsibility of brushing my teeth, and never got tired of flushing my mouth until the water was clear. I wished I could tell her to stop, but knew that it was in my interest to have a clean mouth as this

would lessen the chances of getting an infection. On one of the occasions I spat a lump of blood in the tray and she said “very good”.

My face grew big on day two and bigger on day three. I took some pictures using my cell phone camera, but up to this day, I still cannot believe that was my face. It was huge and scary.

I had my first shower on Wednesday morning and changed into a fresh pair of pyjamas, boy did it feel refreshing. One of the nurses was by my side whenever I left the bed to ensure that the drip line was disconnected, there was no reverse flow of blood, and that I would not stumble and fall. Becky also showed up briefly on day three and assured me that the swelling would subside the next day. By now, I could breathe comfortably and asked Nurse Teresa to turn off the oxygen.

Life at the hospital was routine. Professor Chen and his team would walk in between 7.00 and 7.30 every morning, nurses would walk in hourly to monitor my temperature, blood pressure, changing the drip bag, and giving me an antibiotic shot about twice or thrice daily, feeding me, giving me medication, cleaning my nose and delivering fresh ice packs to help reduce the swelling. Brushing my teeth was a nightmare. The process was so elaborate and tiring, yet the nurses would insist on flushing my mouth until the water was clear.

By Thursday morning, the swelling had begun to subside. Bleeding from the nose had stopped, and was no longer breathing through the mouth. I was feeling stronger, and was drinking more packets of milk and juice. Milk had become monotonous so I asked one of the nurses to buy me some corn soup for a change. I could use the toilet without support from the nurses and even left my room and walked around on 5th floor. I would spend my days in hospital sleeping, watching CNN and occasionally sending text messages and emails to my family in Uganda.

I also spent time watching smoke from a chimney at the top of a dome shaped structure that was visible from my large window. The view was scenic on clear days, but grey and miserable whenever there was a change in weather. The weather in Taiwan towards the end of the year was quite unpredictable. A clear sky with perfect sunshine in the early

morning was no guarantee that the weather would remain the same. It could get cloudy, foggy and windy, with light to severe precipitation.

The weather could be anything, nothing to take for granted. It could change within minutes and catch one unawares. Becky had advised me to have an umbrella whenever I left the hotel to avoid getting wet, as it would rain with very short notice.

It mattered not whether the weather was fine or inclement. I was in hospital and confined to my bed. The only positive was that I felt better and stronger by the day.

My routine was the same on Friday morning, had a shower by 6.am, breakfast thirty minutes later, followed by the elaborate brushing routine and meeting with Professor Chen with his team at 7.30am. He said I would be leaving hospital but cautioned me to avoid hitting my head on any surface, or moving too much. He advised that I should rest as much as possible and eat a balanced diet. Shortly after he had left, one of the nursing staff came and removed the intravenous line. Now that was a sign that I was leaving Hospital.

Becky and Eunice arrived at 9.00am to help me pack my belongings, but advised me to wait for nurse Theresa who would provide me with medication and caring tips.

Thirty minutes later nurse Theresa walked into my room with medication and instructions on OGS patient care tips. She informed me that Professor Chen was very worried that I was going to the hotel and would be there alone without family, so she asked me to be extra careful and contact Becky in case anything came up. She helped me pack the medication into my bags.

Becky saw me off in a taxi and gave the driver instructions on how to get to the hotel.

All this movement made me tired and slept immediately I got to the room. Two hours later, I woke up feeling very hungry, and walked out to the 7-eleven super market to buy milk and juice. I felt these would not

be enough and would need to take some solid food. However, I could not chew so had to purchase a blender. Once back at the hotel, I asked the reception clerk to write "blender" in mandarin. He advised me to walk a couple of blocks away from the hotel and look for "3 C" electronics shop. On my way there, I located a shop that sold surgical masks and bought myself a pack containing six, pulled out one and wore it immediately.

The mask concealed half of my face, which brought a sense of relief and comfort as I did not have to bother about what I looked like. Besides, wearing such masks is common in Taiwan, so I did not feel out of place. I purchased the blender and made it back slowly to the hotel. I had soup and milk, this time with a spoon and straw. I still felt hungry, but too tired to walk out and buy food.

There was no nurse to pamper me, so brushing and keeping my mouth clean was now my responsibility. It was very hard work, and took me half an hour to brush my teeth, flush all corners of my mouth with water and gargle with Parmasons solution. Boy did I miss the nurses. I had a shower, taking care not to hit the sensitive areas and retired to bed at 10.00pm.

Professor Huang had cautioned me against weight loss so food was not something to be taken for granted. For breakfast, I blended milk, one chocolate muffin, rice porridge and a banana together. Lunch was comprised of corn soup and orange juice while I blended chicken, beef, sausages, Irish potatoes, spinach, eggs and carrots for supper. Feeding was slow, followed by elaborate brushing and gargling.

I watched T.V and rested most of the time. Three lady cleaners would come to my room at 10.00 o'clock every morning. Their work ethic and attitude was not different from the hospital staff. They worked fast, precisely and with purpose, and well coordinated like a group of worker termites. It took them less than five minutes to clean and organise the entire room complete with change of bed sheets. Becky had taught me how to say thank you in Mandarin, and would say "She-shay" to them before they left. They would smile and reply in unison, "bukachi".

After two straight days of resting, I decided to adventure to town to buy a Nexus one phone for a friend. I had been advised against moving but

ignored doctor's advice. Dizziness set in two minutes after boarding the Chang Gung hospital shuttle bus from Linko to Taipei. I decided against further movement and once in Taipei, boarded another bus back to Linko, and walked straight to the hotel.

My first review was on 30th November 2011, Nine days after surgery. As usual, Becky had called me the previous night to remind me. On the way to hospital, I met one of the junior surgeons, who had removed tubes from me twelve hours after surgery. I sat next to him on the bus and we had a good chat all the way. It was also an opportunity for me to talk and exercise my mouth as I had not done much talking for over one week.

I arrived at the craniofacial center fifteen minutes before the agreed meeting time, so decided to go check out my swollen face in the gents. Professor Huang met me there before I had removed my mask. "Ah, you are here. Okay, I will see you" and walked out.

Becky arrived at 9.00 and just like before, led me to Professor Chen's consultation room.

"How are you feeling today? I need to have some x-rays and photos taken first before I see you."

I had an O.P.G and cephalometric x-ray, followed by 2D and 3D photographs, and finally, a neurosensitivity test. I had gone through the same procedure two weeks earlier and the staff worked with similar speed and urgency. The difference this time round was that I was fragile and had to be handled with care. Becky was always close by to interpret as other hospital staff spoke little or no English.

Ten minutes later I was back with Professor Huang to review the x-rays and photographs. "Okay, you look different. The big jaw is gone, and will look very handsome when the swelling goes down. Try opening your mouth. By now you should be able to fit one finger, and in seven days time, two fingers like this...." He demonstrated how the two fingers should fit vertically. I thought he was crazy. I could not even open my mouth wide enough for any of my fingers to fit!

He was happy with the results and progress, and more especially with the fact that I had not lost any weight. He ended by saying, "Make sure you clean the mouth thoroughly, especially near the surgical sites so that the food debris does not cause infections."

Professor Chen was busy, so Becky asked me to wait at the coffee shop outside the hospital where I met two junior surgeons that were part of the surgery team nine days earlier. We chatted briefly before they left for duty.

After a two hour wait, Becky came and informed me that Professor Chen was now available. It was just him and his assistant, no junior surgeons and the meeting was brief. He too was happy with the reduction in swelling. He told me to return seven days later so the stitches could be removed. Just before leaving he asked, "So, are you enjoying Chinese food?" I answered in the affirmative and he smiled. He cautioned me against trying to open my mouth too wide. "Once you feel pain, it means the body is not ready to do what you are trying to make it do and you should not force it."

The shuttle took about seven minutes between Linko and Taoyuan, a journey I was now used to. Back at the hotel, I got the tour guides Becky had given me and planned for a trip to Taipei every two days to enable me exercise and break the monotony of staying in the hotel room.

Unfortunately, the weather was never on my side. It would be nice and sunny whenever I stayed at the hotel, but would rain cats and dogs on the days I planned to go to Taipei. The temperature dropped by about five degrees and it would be very foggy and windy most of the day.

I would always meet Professor Huang first whenever I went to hospital. This time was no different. He examined me briefly, checked my weight, ensured I got a CD of all x-rays and photographs taken before and after surgery and wished me a safe trip back home.

Professor Chen's room was full this time round. All the junior surgeons were present. He did not have a dental chair, the brief and painless

procedure to have the stitches removed was performed while I lay on a small bed.

When we were done he informed me that it was a relief to see me recovering so well, and disclosed that he was worried about me leaving the hospital without any one helping me around at the hotel. However, all that was behind me now. Unlike earlier discussions, our final discussion was much more relaxed, and digressed from surgery and medicine. It was good to have a laugh with the surgeons. It had all come to an end after almost two years of planning.

I left after a brief handshake and asked Becky to take me to the nurse station on 5th floor. Unfortunately, most of them were away attending to patients at the time.

The trip back to Uganda took 30 hours (flying and transit time combined) and was very tiring. I had to get rid of the surgical mask in Dubai as they are not worn commonly unlike in South East Asia. I got used to getting round without one and was not conscious about my appearance anymore.

My family is glad that I went through the procedure without incident.

I visited the orthodontist upon my return and she is happy with the result. I am also happy with the results, and can not wait for the swelling to subside fully. There is still one year of orthodontic treatment ahead of me, but am confident that the desired result shall be achieved.

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