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*Please consider the following miracle story for the holidays.*

## Army National Guardsman Makes Miracle Recovery after Being Internally Decapitated in Car Accident



Army specialist Rashaad Gregory, 19, of Phoenix is making an amazing recovery this holiday season following a serious car accident that left him internally decapitated. Gregory was rushed to St. Joseph's Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix where neurosurgeons refused his skull with his spine using an innovative surgery that was perfected at Barrow. The injury, occipitocervical dislocation, is a critical injury that is almost universally fatal.

After the neurosurgery and three additional surgeries to repair his internal organs, Gregory is walking, talking, and plans to attend college to become an elementary school teacher - an amazing feat for the type of injury he suffered.

Gregory's surgery - called an occipitocervical fusion surgery - involved using a titanium rod and wires along with a piece of his own rib to reattach the skull with the spine. Barrow surgeons have more experience treating this deadly injury than anywhere in the world. Gregory spent four months in the hospital and is currently undergoing outpatient rehabilitation.

"When someone suffers this type of injury, the head and spine are so very unstable that even gentle movement of a patient can lead to death," says Kumar Kakarla, MD, Gregory's neurosurgeon at Barrow. "At Barrow, we have one of the world's largest group of survivors with this injury and Gregory's outcome has been exceptional."

Not only is his recovery incredible, but his personality and positivity are unmeasured. For the Army specialist who at a young age dreamed of joining the military, Gregory is defying odds and hopes to inspire others.

"A positive attitude changes everything," says Gregory. "I can't turn back the clock and wish this injury didn't happen to me. Instead, I choose to move forward and make everyday a gift."

— Barrow —

**Gregory and Dr. Kakarla are available for interviews today and Friday. Please call 602-406-3319 to schedule.**

Photos are attached. The first photo is one of Gregory. The second photo shows a complete separation of the base of the skull from C1 (spine). The black space between the base of the skull and C1 should not be there. The third photo is the patient's scan post-surgery. Animations and illustrations of the surgical technique can be made available.