‘No one wanted to be my friend’

Born without anus, he was mocked much of his life. His misery nearly drove him to suicide but he turned life around

By JUDITH IAN

His condition was so embarrassing that it nearly drove him to suicide. And he ended up nowhere near growing up at Warehouse operations supervisor M.B. Nesh, 26, was born with an imperforate anus, which means he did not have an anal opening. (See report on facing page)

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Nesh was born without a functioning anal sphincter.

As the latest surgery provides a fluid-filled bag around his anal canal to act like an anal sphincter — to let out waste when it is socially convenient and to hold his stool when it is not, said his surgeon, Dr Aileen Seah, a general surgeon with Parkway East Hospital, said Mr M.B. Nesh was born without a functioning anal sphincter.

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“I was also seated near the door in case I needed to leave,” he said.

“I was relegated to the back of the class where I sat alone. No one wanted to sit with me or be my friend. They said I was stinky,” Mr Nesh said.

He remembers being in his dark bedroom starved, his condition was so embarrassing that it nearly drove him to suicide.

“I still wore diapers when I went to K1 (first year at kindergarten) and because of that, the children teased me. It got so bad I didn’t want to go back. I cried and became violent. I hung out with the wrong crowd and was often hauled into the disciplinary master’s office,” he said.

At 16, in Secondary 2, Mr Nesh dropped out of school. That same year, his world crumbled. His mother, who was his rock and supporter, died suddenly from a heart attack. Eight months later, his older brother, 19, died in a road accident.”

But having to move heavy equipment around his anal canal, he is now able to live a normal life.

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“I picked fights and became violent. I hung out with the wrong crowd and was often hauled into the disciplinary master’s office,” he said.

“I was at my lowest then... My parents who propped me up, died in a road accident,” he said, tears welling up in his eyes. “I also remembered telling myself: ‘If I did that, then I would disappoint my late mother who always encouraged me to make something out of my life despite my condition.’”

Mr Nesh, who now lives with his eldest brother and sister in the west, picked himself up and started over.

At 18, he went to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International Learning Center to get a diploma in logistics and operations management and later got a job as a shipping clerk. But having to move heavy equipment around his anal canal, he is now able to live a normal life.

ODD JOBS

He started part-time and took up odd jobs, working as a cleaner, courier and security guard. Then a motorcycle accident while doing his national service worsened his condition.

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The operations meant Mr Nesh’s stools were drained from the intestine through the stoma into a bag attached to his abdomen.

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“What this means is, when I eat, I would need to change the battery after three to five years, and that would cost between $7,000 and $8,000. How could I afford it?” he said.

So Mr Nesh picked a cheaper, subsidised option — a colostomy and stoma bags — and had the surgery in 2013.

He said he paid only a small amount because the surgery was subsidised and he used his MediSave.

On the other hand, the bag does not get filled with fluid, it bulges and is unappealing to the anal canal, guys who are normally smaller in size. The plastic bag is replaced between two and three hours.

An artificial bowel sphincter was implanted around his anal canal so he is able to control his bowel movements.

“The band flattens out, releasing gas and stool into the stoma and three hours. If the band is filled with fluid, it bulges and unappealing to the anal canal, guys who are normally smaller in size. The plastic bag is replaced between two and three hours.

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Mr Nesh, who recently married his girlfriend of two years, said he is happy with the result.

“If I get a second chance to make something of myself, I will definitely make sure I will live up to my late parents’ expectations.”
