

Wednesday, May 7th 2014 12PM



Woman born without a vagina has one made using skin from her THIGH

The 26-year-old anonymous woman had surgery in Argentina
Was diagnosed with Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome
Surgeons took skin from the woman's inner thigh, rather than her colon
Follows on from U.S. scientists growing four vaginas in a laboratory

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PUBLISHED: 05:49 EST, 7 May 2014 | **UPDATED:** 05:58 EST, 7 May 2014

A woman born without a vagina has had one made using skin from her thigh. The 26-year-old anonymous woman had surgery in Argentina after discovering she had Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome when she was 14.

This is characterised by the absence of the vagina, womb and cervix and is a congenital abnormality affecting one in 5,000 women.



A woman born without a vagina has had one made using skin from her thigh, surgeons have reported

Plastic surgeons in San Martin, Buenos Aires, used an unusual technique whereby a vaginoplasty was performed using the internal skin of the woman's thigh.

This allowed surgeons to avoid opening the woman's abdomen to get a portion of the colon, which is the usual way to perform the procedure, according to surgeon Hector Lanza, head of the hospital's Plastic Surgery and Reconstructive department.

The surgery was performed in 2012 but has only come to light now after a paper about the case was reported in the journal *Aesthetic Plastic Surgery*, published by the International Society of Aesthetic Surgery (ISAPS).

It follows the news last month that four women suffering from the same syndrome were given new artificial vaginas grown in a laboratory. Their new vaginas were engineered by scientists at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's Institute for Regenerative Medicine in the U.S, using the women's own cells. One of the women who received a new vagina, interviewed by *New Scientist*, says the procedure helped to normalise her life.

She said: 'At the beginning it wasn't easy, thinking that a part of your body was going to be made in a laboratory. It was difficult to understand.'



Yuanyuan Zhang demonstrates the process where four young women born with abnormal or missing vaginas were implanted with lab-grown versions made from their own cells

'But as the years pass and with the good results, you find a way of life which is different but not too far from normality.'

Women with MRKH have normally functioning ovaries and so will experience the normal signs of puberty but will not have periods or be able to conceive.

The external genitalia are completely normal which is why MRKH isn't usually discovered until women are in their teenage years.

It's usually discovered when the woman tries to have sex or fails to get her period.

Many women are able to create a vaginal canal using dilation treatment, which uses cylinder shaped dilators of different sizes to stretch the muscles.

However, if this is unsuccessful then surgery will be used to stretch the vaginal canal.

Following treatment women are able to have intercourse and can have their eggs removed and fertilised to be used in surrogacy.