

Vietnam's Vinmec Performs Rare Total Elbow Megaprosthesis, Restoring Arm Function After 27 Years

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[Healthcare System](#) has successfully performed a rare and highly complex total elbow megaprosthesis, restoring arm function for a patient after 27 years of severe disability. The breakthrough marks a new milestone in advanced orthopedic surgery in Vietnam and strengthens Vinmec's appeal as a trusted destination for high-complexity medical care.

A 27-Year History of Severe Post-Traumatic Elbow Deformity

For nearly three decades, patient Vu Hong Phong has lived with a severe left-arm disability resulting from a complex elbow injury sustained in his youth. The condition progressively worsened over time, leading to chronic inflammation, significant bone erosion, restricted mobility, and visible shortening of the affected arm.

After years of seeking care at multiple medical facilities and undergoing several surgeries, Phong saw little improvement. Gradually resigning himself to the possibility of living with the deformity for life, Phong eventually found renewed hope when he arrived at Vinmec Times City International Hospital.

There, clinicians identified his condition as an exceptionally complex post-traumatic sequela. "This is an extremely rare case with a very high level of complexity, and there are virtually no



The patient struggled with a rare elbow deformity for 27 years.



Vinmec's team opted for a total elbow megaprosthesis with bone defect reconstruction, supported by in-house 3D technology.

precedents in Vietnam,” said Dr. Tran Quyet, Head of Upper Limb Surgery, Musculoskeletal and Orthopedic Trauma Center, Vinmec Times City.

Much of the original anatomical framework had been erased by time. The elbow joint was completely fused and unstable, with an estimated 6-centimeter defect in the distal humerus, resulting in the left arm being 4-5 centimeters shorter than the right.

It was this level of anatomical loss that pushed the case beyond standard elbow replacement. Historically, megaprotheses were developed primarily for [limb-salvage surgery](#) in bone cancer. While their use has gradually expanded over time, its application at the elbow, particularly outside oncologic settings, continues to remain uncommon. Phong’s case fell squarely into that exceptional category.

3D-Guided Elbow Megaprosthesis Restores Function

“The patient has waited for 27 years. Another failure would have had a severe psychological impact. That is why we were determined to create a new opportunity to change his life,” Dr. Quyet stated.

Following extensive multidisciplinary discussions, Vinmec’s medical team made a decisive turning point: a total elbow megaprosthesis combined with reconstruction of the extensive bone defect. The path forward relied on precision long before the day of surgery. Using advanced in-hospital 3D technology, surgeons rebuilt Phong’s elbow anatomy virtually, layer by layer. CT-based models allowed them to simulate the deformity, plan reconstruction in detail, and design a prosthesis tailored specifically to his anatomy.

That preparation proved decisive. The operation was completed successfully, with no nerve or vascular injury recorded. Just three days later, Phong was able to gently move his arm. After two weeks, he could fully extend and flex his elbow, abduct his arm, and raise it overhead.

“After nearly 30 years, I finally feel like I have a normal arm again. It moves so naturally as if I never had surgery at all,” the patient shared emotionally.

Yet the most profound impact of the operation was not only measured in hours or degrees of movement. It was felt in the moment when a man who had adapted to limitation for most of his adult life began to reclaim independence, ordinary actions that restored confidence and hope.

A New Global Center for Orthopedic Excellence

The miracle, in Phong’s case, was not sudden. It is cumulative, built through a succession of clinical firsts. In 2025, Vinmec carried out a personalized total femoral replacement using 3D-printed metal for a young child with aggressive bone cancer - preserving the limb in a case where amputation had been widely advised. Earlier, the system became the first hospital in

Southeast Asia to successfully perform a fully 3D-printed titanium chest wall reconstruction.

These milestones reflect Vinmec's patient-first culture, where multidisciplinary teams tackle the most complex cases, apply advanced technology with precision, and take responsibility for life-changing outcomes.

Cases like Phong's resonate beyond national borders. They speak to patients around the world, many of whom have been told that options are exhausted, yet continue to search quietly for another possibility. In Vinmec International Healthcare System, a growing body of evidence suggests that such possibilities are being rebuilt, carefully and deliberately, one life at a time.

Global Communications Company
Vinmec Healthcare System
v.medtour@vinmec.com

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