

Rajmohan Bhotra's story



Name: Rajmohan Bhotra

Age: 32

Location: Nabarangpur District, Odisha, India

Rajmohan Bhotra is from a small village in the Nabarangpur District of Odisha in India. He is 32 and works in a small hotel while his wife, Lachma, is an agricultural worker. Together, they have built a happy and humble life for themselves

however, it hasn't always been that way. The couple have been on a long and painful journey to reach this point...

Three years ago, Rajmohan discovered a dreaded patch on his knee that he ignored until it became unavoidable. He started to lose feeling in this particular area and, no longer able to feel cuts and burns, these transpired into ulcers and infections. This stopped him from working and pushed him and Lachma into a further state of poverty.

With a household depending on his income, Rajmohan worried about making ends meet, a worry that would haunt the couple for years to come while they searched for a diagnosis and treatment to this mystery illness.

They began by visiting traditional healers and paid extortionate fees for tropical remedies that failed to muster any kind of relief. During this relentless search for answers, Rajmohan's foot dropped – a common side effect of leprosy. It was shortly after this happened that local doctors were able to identify the symptoms as leprosy and Rajmohan began treatment that would prevent any further nerve damage or permanent disability.

While he was happy to be cured, the consequences however, had a lasting effect and Rajmohan was still unable to resume his job at the hotel.

It was at this point that a local ASHA who knew Rajmohan contacted our centre in Odisha and asked them to help. Our workers visited Rajmohan and enrolled him at one of our clinics where we could spend time reducing his ulcers and show him how to properly care for his affected limbs. After 32 days, once Rajmohan's ulcers were healed, Rajmohan return home complete with a new pair of custom-made, protective shoes.

While once again this was a positive outcome, Rajmohan still had no job and no way of earning a living. Word of his disease had reached his previous employers at the hotel and, despite him being leprosy-free, they would not entertain the idea of having him back.

To remedy this and dispel the stigma of leprosy, we decided to visit the hotel and give a talk to the workers. This helped in their understanding of leprosy and allowed them to reconsider hiring Rajmohan, which they did.

Happy to be back earning a living, Rajmohan adapted to working life again with his dropped foot. We also helped Rajmohan gain access to a disability pension from the government, wage loss

compensation for those years of work he missed and financial support to install a latrine that would help with the self-care techniques he needed to perform.

To improve things a little further, last year, three years after a diagnosis, we performed reconstructive surgery on Rajmohan's dropped foot.

Now, he shows no visible signs of his long battle with leprosy. He is confident and brimming with energy promising to continuously spread the word on the availability of leprosy treatment. Already, we have diagnosed one individual with leprosy because of Rajmohan's advocacy. He has helped improve and life and you can too by visiting www.lepra.org.uk