

US hails face-replacing surgery

A YOUNG man horrifically injured by an electric shock while working on a cherry picker has successfully received the United States' first full face transplant.

Dallas Wiens, 25, can look forward to a new life with a donated face attached by a 30-strong team at Brigham and Women's Hospital, which said it was the first full face transplant performed in the country.

Although plastic surgeons could not restore Wiens's sight, he is otherwise on the road to recovery and already chatting, the lead doctor, Bohdan Pomahac, said yesterday.

"He's awake and talking on a cell phone," he said.

Wiens, from Texas, was injured in November 2008 when his head touched a high voltage electrical wire. The burns literally erased his face.

Dr Pomahac led the team of physicians, nurses and anesthesiologists for more than



REMARKABLE MILESTONE: Plastic surgeon Dr Bohdan Pomahac, far right, explains the transplant procedure. At far left, recipient Dallas Wiens, 25, before the accident and after. **Pictures: AP**

15 hours to replace Wiens's "nose, lips, facial skin, muscles of facial animation and the nerves that power them to provide sensation", a statement said. The \$302,000 cost was met

by the US Department of Defense as part of research.

Wiens's grandfather, Del Peterson, said: "Dallas always said after the injury that he now had a choice: he could just

choose to get bitter, or choose to get better. He chose to get better. Now he is better."

Dr Pomahac said the prognosis for patients in such operations was good.