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Doctors perform nation's first five-way domino kidney swap

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MUMBAI: The country's first domino kidney transplant operations involving five patients and five of their relatives were successfully carried out in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Three hospitals, 10 operation theatres and 40 doctors were involved in carrying out these operations simultaneously. Four operations were carried out at Bombay Hospital in New Marine Lines, another four at L H Hiranandani Hospital in Powai and two at Hinduja Hospital in Mahim.

A domino transplant involves a chain of donors and recipients. When a relative is unable to donate his or her kidney to an organ-failure patient due to mismatch of blood tissues, he or she can opt to give it to another patient, whose relative, in turn, donates a kidney to the first patient. When more than two pairs of donors and recipients are involved, these swap transplants are called domino transplants.

"All the donors and recipients are doing well," said Dr Vishwanath Billa of the Apex Swap Transplant Registry, a not-for-profit agency that uses a computer software to facilitate swap transplants by bringing various pairs together.

In Tuesday's transplants, four couples from Mumbai and a father-daughter pair from Rajasthan swapped kidneys. The domino chain of five had two pairs who could donate kidneys to each other. "The father-daughter pair from Rajasthan and the Mumbai couple Samsunissa and Mohammad were suitable for a binary swap but they insisted on joining the domino chain because they could save more lives by doing so," said Dr Billa.

"It took us two years to achieve Tuesday's domino transplants," said nephrologist Dr Shrirang Bichu from Bombay Hospital. Kidney transplant needs authorisation of the government, leading to bureaucratic hurdles. "In this domino chain, we were dealing with the bureaucracy of two states, so it was a daunting task. But once the Maharashtra authorisation committee understood what we were doing, it extended all support," Dr Bichu added.

There was a delay in paperwork from the Rajasthan government as well. In fact, an earlier domino planned among five pairs of relatives, including one from Andhra Pradesh, failed after a patient died.

The doctors said they hoped Tuesday's domino transplant would increase awareness about swap transplants. "There are three options for kidney-failure patients. Their close relative can donate a kidney to them, they can get a cadaveric (brain dead patient) kidney or they can opt for a swap transplant," said Dr Billa. But only 400 living donor transplants and 40 cadaveric transplants are carried out in Mumbai annually. Swap transplants barely account for 20 transplants.

In contrast, Mumbai has tens of thousands of kidney-failure patients. "The Mumbai Zonal Transplant Coordination Centre has 2,000 patients on its waiting list for cadaveric kidneys. Even if 15% of these patients manage to get a kidney through swap transplants, it would reduce the waiting list greatly," said Dt Jatin Kothari from Hinduja Hospital.

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40 docs perform first domino kidney swap

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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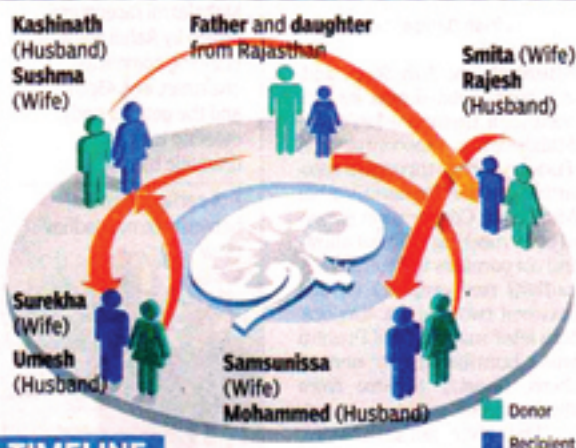
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LIVES LINKED FOREVER

A domino kidney swap was achieved in Mumbai on Tuesday involving five patients suffering from end-stage kidney disease (or kidney failure) and five of their relatives



TIMELINE

- Work on the domino transplant began almost two years ago. The first attempt failed when a patient died waiting for the Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra governments to green-light the attempt (government nod is necessary for kidney transplants involving non-family members)

- The second bid started six months ago. The key problem was in getting clearance for the term 'domino' transplant. Officials said no such term existed in the Human Organ Transplant Act

- The doctors had to meet the authorities to explain that the domino term was nothing more than swap transplants allowed through an amendment in HOTA in 2011

SURGERIES

- The operations took place between 8.30am and 2.30pm at Bombay Hospital, Hiranandani Hospital and Hinduja Hospital

- Forty doctors were involved and 10 operation theatres used

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