

First domino kidney transplant saves 5 lives

Mumbai Mirror | Jun 26, 2013, 01.04 AM IST



Mumbai Mirror Bureau

10 surgeries, in which donors and recipients formed a human chain, were performed simultaneously by over 40 doctors at three hospitals on Tuesday.

The country's first domino kidney transplant, involving five families, was carried out in three city hospitals on Tuesday morning. A team of over 40 senior doctors performed 10 surgeries simultaneously, saving the lives of five patients suffering from kidney failure.

While four pairs of donors and recipients are from Mumbai, one pair is from Rajasthan. One pair involved a father-daughter, while the others were of husband-wife. The transplants were carried out in Bombay Hospital, Hiranandani and Hinduja.

Anormal swap transplant is one involving just two kidney patients who swap their donors in order to achieve a compatible match. A domino transplant, however, involves more than two pairs of families who form a human chain, wherein donors are swapped with recipients to achieve compatible matches.

"It took us two years to form this chain and get all the required permissions from the two states involved," said Dr Vishwanath Billa, nephrologist and transplant physician attached to Bombay Hospital.

Dr Billa, who is also a member of Apex Swap Transplant Registry (ATSRA), said that the first domino chain that the team tried to put together failed when one of the patients died in November 2011. "We had worked hard to prepare the chain but our efforts were brought to naught when one patient died. This is the second domino chain we worked on, and it has turned out a success," said Dr Billa, adding that such swap transplants are a life-saver for patients with incompatible donors. In fact, ASTRA has created a database of such patients who have family members willing to donate kidneys but cannot go ahead due to incompatible blood groups.

So far, ASTRA has facilitated 30 swap transplants and has a waiting list of 65. "Once there is a larger database, we can work on more such complex chains to benefit a greater number of patients who are unable to find a compatible donor," said nephrologist Dr Shrirang Bichu of Bombay Hospital.

According to Dr Jatin Kothari of Hinduja Hospital, the waiting period for patients in an organ transplant registry is over 6 years, "However, the waiting period for a swap transplant in ASTRA is merely three months. This is the kind of difference that it makes to the patient who is suffering," said Kothari, adding that it would be ideal to merge the existing registries to enable more such transplants.

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