

The Tribune

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

PGI's youngest-ever donor, all of 70 hours, saves life in death

In a pioneering surgery, doctors use newborn's kidneys to save the life of a patient who was battling renal failure

Chandigarh, February 20

A newborn, who lived for less than 70 hours, became the PGI's youngest-ever organ donor in the history of the cadaver organ transplant programme that was initiated in 1996.

Doctors at the PGI carried out the pioneering surgery on Wednesday night, minutes after the child's death. The baby's kidneys were then used to save an adult suffering from renal failure.

The child was born at Government Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, and was referred to the PGI on February 16 due to some complications. The recipient is said to be in a stable condition.

The newborn baby had brain anomalies incompatible with life. When the attending doctors told the parents that their baby wouldn't survive, they reached out to transplant coordinators themselves to give consent for organ donation, following which doctors moved quickly to perform the rare and intricate operation to remove his kidneys and use these to save another life.

Sharing details of the case, Prof Ashish Sharma, Head of the Department of Renal Transplant Surgery, PGI, said, "The donor was a newborn; so the retrieval was not a routine procedure and demanded extreme deftness and skill to accomplish it successfully. The best-matched recipient was an adult; so both kidneys were transplanted on to one recipient considering the age factor."

“The case is also important as it puts the focus back on ‘neo-natal organ donation’ as a way of increasing the number of organ donors in the future. Retrieving organs from children for transplant is rare and it is even more uncommon from newborn babies with congenital anomalies,” he said.

The parents of the newborn, who hail from Patiala, said “It’s something no family should have to go through. We said yes to organ donation because we knew this could help someone else and they wouldn’t need to go through the heartache that we were going through. We knew it was the right thing to do.”

“We just want people to know about the cause and not who did it as we have done it so that our baby relives through others. We have done it for our own peace and solace. We hope our child’s story will inspire families who find themselves in the same situation. We want to make people aware of organ donation to realise that death is not the end of things, people can live on through others, through this,” said the parents.

Prof Jagat Ram, Director, PGI, said, “A team of PGI experts, right from neonatology, radiology, nephrology, anaesthesia, immunopathology and transplant surgery complemented by extended teams from testing labs and nursing units, enabled this rare and landmark transplant within a tiny time frame.”

“It was not possible to reach this far without the gritty decision and selfless gesture of the donor family, who is the fulcrum on which the success of this transplant hinges,” said Prof Jagat Ram.