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KEM Hospital makes history with India's first paediatric kidney swap transplants

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MUMBAI: In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the BMC-run KEM Hospital has become the first public hospital in the country to carry out a paediatric renal swap transplant.

HOSPITAL PLANS SWAP TRANSPLANT REGISTRY



➤ Two 15-year-old boys with renal failure got kidneys from the other's parent at the civic-run KEM Hospital, Parel, in March

➤ The hospital now plans to start a swap transplant registry for the benefit of the paediatric age group

“ If children who are renal patients undergo transplants before six years of age, their growth will not be affected

Dr Sujata Patwardhan |
HEAD OF UROLOGY, KEM HOSPITAL

The patients are 15-year-old boys who suffer from a congenital abnormality of the urinary tract that led to kidney failure. As the boys couldn't find a suitable kidney donor within their families, a swap transplant was the only option. The mother of one of the boys and the father of the other donated kidneys for the swap transplants.

KEM Hospital dean Dr Hemant Deshmukh said these transplants were a silver lining in these Covid times. "We didn't want to talk about the transplants (done on March 6) before completing six months. We not only managed to carry out the transplants successfully, we also ensured that both the children didn't contract Covid-19 despite being on the maximum doses of immunosuppressant drugs," said Dr Deshmukh.

The sister of one of the transplant patients said that the boys are doing well. "It has been quite a journey as we had to travel to the hospital from Malad and Panvel, respectively, every week during the lockdown for a checkup," she said, adding that the families spoke over the phone every day.

KEM Hospital nephrology head Dr Tukaram Jamale said the transplants were preemptive in that both the children hadn't yet reached a stage where they needed weekly dialysis. "Starting dialysis at such an early age could have affected their growth. The transplants are hence unique," he said.

While the boys were under treatment for their congenital problem for years at the neighbouring Wadia Hospital, the families didn't know each other. It was through a central counseling software for kidney pair donors that these two pairs were selected by a random match, said KEM Hospital's head of urology department, Dr Sujata Patwardhan, who performed two of the four surgeries that day.

"The operations were carried out in four operation theatres. We used advanced 3D laparoscopy technique to remove the kidneys from the donors," said Dr Patwardhan. While transplanting adult-sized kidneys in a paediatric patient is technically a challenging task, all the four surgeries were finished within six hours without any complications, said Dr Patwardhan.

These swap transplants were postponed three times in the past as each time one of the children developed some infection.