Splitting Livers Between an Adult and a Child Could Expand Transplant Options

The surgical practice is common in the United Kingdom but rare in the United States.

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Dividing livers from deceased donors into two unequal parts, giving the smaller one to a child and the larger one to an adult, could expand transplantation options. The surgical practice is rare in the United States but common in the United Kingdom.

Presenting their findings at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases in Washington, DC, researchers analyzed data on the more than 35,000 livers available for transplant in the United States between 2010 and 2015. Although about 2,300 livers could potentially have been split between an adult and a child due to various deciding factors, only 4 percent of them actually were.

Given that about half of the 2,300 splittable organs were transplanted into individuals who would not have been optimal candidates for a split organ, the researchers considered 1,100 of the organs potentially suitable for splitting.

Across the various regions included in the overall analysis, the number of splittable organs exceeded that of the number of children who died while waiting for a liver transplant.

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