Transplanted HCV-Infected Kidneys Function Well After 1 Year

Such kidneys are increasingly, and safely, being transplanted into people who do not have hepatitis C.

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An increasing number of kidneys are being successfully and safely transplanted from donors with hepatitis C virus (HCV) into recipients who do not have the virus. A new analysis has found that such kidneys remain functional for at least the first year after transplantation.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of the American Society of Nephrology, a research team led by Vishnu S. Potluri, MD, MPH, David S. Goldberg, MD, MSCE and Peter P. Reese, MD, MSCE, of the University of Pennsylvania, analyzed 2015 to 2019 national transplant registry data on the use of HCV-infected kidneys.

Previous research has indicated that HCV-positive kidneys can be safely transplanted into those without the virus, who can then undergo direct-acting antiviral treatment and clear the virus.

Until September 2018, the majority of HCV-positive kidneys were transplanted into people who already had hep C. Since then, the majority has flipped.

In 2015, 2,936 people were willing to receive an HCV-positive kidney, a figure that ballooned to 16,809 people in 2019.

During the first quarter of 2019, 269 HCV-positive kidneys were transplanted, including 200 into HCV-negative recipients and 69 into HCV-positive recipients. A total of 105 HCV-positive kidneys were discarded. Between 2015 and 2019, the likelihood that an HCV-positive kidney would be discarded declined.

One year after transplantation into HCV-negative recipients, HCV-positive kidneys, compared with HCV-negative kidneys of similar quality, had similar eGFR results (a measure of kidney function): 66.3 versus 67.1 The hep C status of the recipient was not associated with a significant difference in the eGFR after one year.

“Our study showed that transplants with HCV-infected kidneys are now routinely performed at many centers, and they are functioning well at one year after transplant,” Reese said in a press

release.

“These findings represent a small, but important, victory in the effort to make every organ donation count,” added Potluri.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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