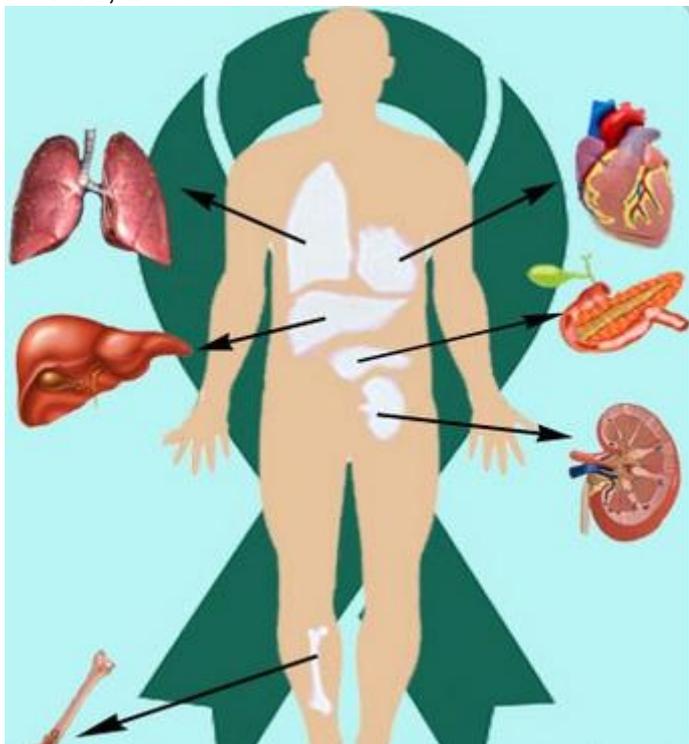


Thousands With Diabetes Awaiting Organs

Nov 19, 2004



Modern successful human organ transplantation has only been around since the 1960s. However, in the relatively short time since then, the number of diseases in which transplantation is a viable and recommended treatment has grown at an impressive rate. So too has grown the need for organ transplants in patients with type 1 diabetes.

When one thinks of transplantation in diabetes, one naturally thinks of pancreas transplantation. While it has been shown to be effective in the reversal of insulin independence, it carries significant health risks and so pancreas-only transplantation is relatively rarely performed.

One of the most serious complications of diabetes is diabetic kidney disease. About 30 percent of patients with Type 1 (juvenile onset) diabetes and 10 to 40 percent of those with Type 2 (adult onset) diabetes eventually will suffer from kidney failure. While dialysis can often provide a temporary stop-gap measure, transplantation of a new kidney is necessary. Often, where a kidney transplant is needed and the patient also suffers from very poor glycemic control, a combined kidney-pancreas transplant can be performed, and is generally very effective.

But access to these life-giving organs is difficult. At present, nearly 80,000 men, women and children are on the national waiting list for all organs ? 15,000 of these patients reside in California. Every 15 minutes, a new name is added to the waiting list and, sadly, it is estimated that each day 12-14 people die waiting for a transplant.

UCSF's outstanding transplant team has achieved great success in conducting both kidney transplants and simultaneous pancreas and kidney transplants -- yet kidneys are in the highest demand and comprise two-thirds of the organ donation waiting list.

In addition, with the increasing success of islet transplantation, it is imperative that a source of insulin-producing cells become available to help save the lives of those who are battling the most serious of diabetic complications. Researchers at UCSF continue to be hopeful that stem cells may provide the answer to our islet supply problem by transforming unspecialized stem cells into healthy, insulin-producing beta cells. However, at this time, our only source for islets is cadaveric pancreases -- and, tragically, very few pancreases are donated each year.

The scientists and staff urge you to discuss becoming an organ donor with your family and friends. And encourage them to do the same. Then, visit the Coalition on Donation to learn how to register as a donor in your state and to learn more about how your decision to become an organ donor could give someone the most precious gift of all ? life.

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