

# eThekwini Hospital performs its first kidney transplant

The eThekwini Hospital and Heart Centre's first renal transplant patients - Devendren and Raveena Naidu - are stable and doing well in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.



Pictured before eThekwini Hospital and Heart Centre's first renal transplant are patients Devendren and Raveena Naidu. Raveena has donated her kidney to husband Devendren Naidu.

General Manager Niresh Bechan on Saturday, 26 February 2012, said that all had gone well during the three hour procedure on Thursday afternoon, marking an important milestone for the hospital.

"The eThekwini Hospital and Heart Centre is an independent private hospital and is a member of the Hospital Association of South Africa and the new National Hospital Network," said Bechan. "Up until now, we have been recognized as a centre of excellence for cardiac care as well as for heart, lung and heart/lung transplants. After months of planning on the renal transplant project, our highly respected and experienced medical team of specialists and staff has delivered and we are really proud."

According to the Organ Donor Foundation, during 2010, 266 kidney transplants were performed in South Africa. Of these, 36% were donated by those directly related to the recipients. However with over 4000 patients currently on dialysis in South Africa, there is a chronic shortage of donated organs.

"We are dealing with extremely sensitive issues. Organ donation is not something that you bring up in general conversation. In reality, this is about life or death. Donating organs saves lives - that's the bottom line," explained the hospital's Transplant Co-ordinator, Cindy Goldie.

## Donation process

Bechan said, most importantly of all, this kidney transplant was certified by the National Department of Health. After receiving the news that a cross match between the couple was successful, they had prepared and submitted the application.

He explained that the National Department of Health's standards are particularly stringent and that authorities insist on a three to six month waiting period so that both donors and recipients are completely comfortable with their decisions and that there has been no coercion.

The Department also requires extensive medical and psychological reports. The Ministerial committee signed consent in the middle of January after which the application was referred to a national panel of medical experts.

## **Family bond**

The couple said their journey towards Thursday's transplant had been a long one. It began with a diagnosis of end-stage kidney failure in June last year. Devendren had suffered from high blood pressure (hypertension) for eight years but this had been controlled via medication. Patients require transplants when end-stage renal disease occurs and the kidneys can no longer filter and remove waste products and excess fluids, manage the body's electrolytes and minerals and secrete hormones that regulate the body's absorption of calcium and produce red blood cells.

The first option was dialysis twice a week for four hours - a process which Devendren describes as "terrible" and says he suffered extremely unpleasant side effects.

From the outset, his wife Raveena had decided to donate a kidney and had approached the hospital. Her decision was a very difficult one for her husband to accept but she was adamant.

"I did not want to put her through so much pain and believed that dialysis would be fine. But, three months down the line, I soon realised that it was not," said Devendren.

According to Goldie, medically, the risks for the donor are far greater as this is an invasive procedure which requires cutting through a major artery to remove the kidney and could involve the removal of a rib. It is very painful and takes at least six weeks to recover.

Devendren will be placed on medication for the rest of his life to ensure that his body does not reject the kidney. "However, everything will be forever changed and he can lead a normal, healthy life," Goldie said.

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