



## Montefiore live-donor transplant program shut down after donor mom dies during surgery

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Montefiore Hospital's renowned live-donor organ-transplant program has been shut down after the death of a mom on the operating table, The Post has learned.

The suspension came after the woman — who was trying to donate a kidney to a male relative — bled to death when her aorta was cut or ruptured during the operation, multiple sources said.

The death of the mother, who had a 2-year-old child, was the first fatality in more than 40 years of live-donor operations at the Bronx hospital. The relative never received her kidney.

The state Health Department considers the death, which occurred in the past two weeks, a "major incident," and is now investigating. Montefiore Einstein Center for Transplantation's program will not resume until that probe is complete, the sources said.

"We are working closely with the hospital to determine what occurred," said Health Department spokesman Bill Schwarz.

Sources said the department did not order Montefiore to suspend the program, adding that the hospital did so on its own while it conducts its own probe.

"This is a terrible tragedy. The patient experienced a rare complication of this surgery," said a hospital spokesman. "The doctors recognized the problem and took extensive steps to save the patient's life."

Montefiore is one of the nation's busiest hospitals for both organ transplants and harvesting organs from live donors.

Of the 3,500 kidney transplants done at Montefiore since 1967, about 1,000 kidneys came from live donors, according to a letter recently sent to staff by the hospital.

Deaths of people during surgery to harvest organs — known as nephrectomy — are extremely rare.

The first known case in New York occurred only in 2008, when the death of 29-year-old Michael King — who had just donated a kidney to his wife at SUNY Downstate Hospital in Brooklyn — spurred both state and federal investigations into why an artery-closing clip that was

under recall had been used.

On its Web page, Montefiore notes that “the risk [of death] is estimated at 0.03 percent, or 3 out of every 10,000 surgeries.”

Until recently, Montefiore’s Web page also boasted that, “In 40 years of performing live donor transplant surgery, Montefiore has not experienced a single living donor death related to donation.”

That sentence was removed in recent weeks, after the death of the mom.

*Additional reporting by Frank Rosario*

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