Israeli Organ Transplant Innovation will save Thousands

An exclusive WorldofJudaica translation from the March 22 edition of the Israel Hayom daily newspaper:

A first in Israel: In Beilinson hospital in Petach Tikva, a kidney transplant was performed on a patient of a blood type incompatible with that of the donor. The first of its kind operation was completed successfully, the patient was released to her home and is currently recovering.

The transplantee, Ortal MalHAV (19) from Herzliya, suffered from a congenital illness that caused kidney insufficiency. She underwent dialysis treatment for a year and a half and was put on the organ transplant waiting list, but since her blood type was Be, she needed a donor with type B or O. Such a donor was not found.

Thank God it Worked

Ortal’s condition deteriorated of late. In a precedent-setting move, the hospital decided to use her father Shlomo’s (51) kidney, even though his blood type was A and her body could have rejected the organ. In order to carry out the transplant under such complicated circumstances, the Transplant Division staff at Beilinson planned out various stages for the first-of-its-kind process. As part of Ortal’s preparation for transplant, the blood bank staff under Dr. Yakov Orlin began filtering Ortal’s antibodies out of her bloodstream in order to reduce the chances of rejection of the new kidney. Additionally, Ortal received blood transfusions and medications to prevent rejection.

“A transplant of this kind signals a breakthrough and enables a substantial increase in the number of organ transplants in Israel,” said Professor Eitan Mor, director of the transplant department at Beilinson. Experience shows that through innovative care and proper monitoring of the level of antibodies in the blood at the time of transplant, it is possible to achieve good results for the long term as well.

Ortal continues to receive post-transplant anti-rejection treatment through neutralizing her body’s antibodies. Her condition is good and she was released home. Her father Shlomo, who donated the kidney that saved her life, said yesterday: “I told myself that it’s better if I donate now rather than later. The medical staff decided to do a procedure that has been done before, but not in Israel, in which you neutralize the blood type of the organ so it’s accepted. And now, thank God, it worked and we’re both recovering at home. I hope Ortal returns quickly to normal life and this will all be behind us.”

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