

Turkish academics' innovative cross-liver transplantation system saving lives

After multiple organ transplants, scientists from various universities in UK, Belgium, Netherlands come to Malatya, eastern Türkiye for training

Yeter Erdine | 12.09.2023 - Update : 13.09.2023



MALATYA, Türkiye

Thirty-three liver patients have been brought back to health at a university in eastern Türkiye by applying a computer software system that matches donors for liver transplants developed by two Turkish economists, Tayfun Sonmez and Utku Unver, from Boston College in the US.

Sezai Yilmaz, the head of Malatya Inonu University's Turgut Ozal Medical Center Liver Transplant Institute, told Anadolu that organ donation from deceased donors often falls short, so patients who want to have a liver transplant must find a live donor.

Stating that to date they have performed more than 3,500 transplants at the institute, Yilmaz said 85% of these transplants were performed from living donors and 15% from deceased donors.

Yilmaz said that only 30-40% of live donors are compatible with the patient, so when a donor is not compatible, they can initiate a donor exchange.

Yilmaz said they did five liver transplants at the same time in 2019, and that after this surgery, Sonmez, who developed the cross-transplant system, came to their hospital and decided to apply the system they developed here.

"The cross-transplant system was developed by Tayfun Sonmez and Utku Unver. Sonmez named this system after his late wife Banu Bedestenci Sonmez. It's a very advanced system. In my opinion, it's one of the most important mathematical models in the world," he said.

"It matches patients waiting in the pool, but there are multiple cross-transplants rather than two," he added.

Yilmaz said economics professors at Boston College actually thought of applying the model in other countries and they did some research in South Korea, but when Sonmez heard that Malatya University was already doing multiple liver transplants, he decided to come to Malatya.

"He told us that we could do this here, we held meetings and conferences. Ultimately, we decided to implement this system here. This has been done very rarely in other parts of the world. Triple cross-transplantation was performed once in India and Pakistan," he said.

“In Malatya, three triple cross-liver transplants and many quadruple cross-liver transplants were performed. With multiple cross-liver transplants, you can offer more people the chance of organ transplantation.”

Yilmaz said that the system has attracted great attention from European universities as well.

“Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England, which holds an extremely important place in the history of transplantation, Ghent University in Belgium, and another university in the Netherlands are in contact with our center to establish and develop a living donor liver transplantation program. They send their academics here for training.”

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