



INSTITUT JANTUNG NEGARA
National Heart Institute

MEDIA RELEASE

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CELEBRATING TWO SUCCESSFUL HEART TRANSPLANTS, IJN INSPIRES HOPE FOR HEART PATIENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11, 2024 — Following the successful completion of two heart transplants, Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) reaffirms its commitment to advancing treatments for heart failure and raising awareness on organ donation.

The two patients, who are in their late teens, received their heart transplants in January this year and are recovering well post-surgery. Both patients were diagnosed with non-ischaemic dilated cardiomyopathy, a heart muscle disease which stretches and thins the heart chambers. This makes it harder for the heart to pump blood to the rest of the body and can sometimes lead to heart failure.

In January, after enduring an agonizing 8-month wait list since May 2023, a 19-year-old patient, dependent on medication, finally received the life-saving gift of a new heart. With immense relief and gratitude, the patient was safely discharged from IJN, marking the end of a challenging journey and the beginning of a new chapter filled with hope and possibility.

Following closely, on January 15th, an 18-year-old patient arrived at IJN due to their worsening condition and just over a month later, on February 20th, the patient underwent LVAD implantation, paving the way for a potential transplant. Miraculously, a mere five days post-implantation, a matching heart donor emerged, igniting a beacon of hope for their future. The use of cutting-edge medical technology and the unwavering commitment of IJN's medical team played a crucial role in ensuring a seamless transition from LVAD support to a successful transplant.

An implantable mechanical pump that helps pump blood from the ventricles to the rest of the body, the LVAD is often used as a "bridge" to heart transplantation while the patient awaits a suitable donor. In some instances, particularly for heart failure patients who are unable to undergo transplant surgery at all, a LVAD can even serve as long-term treatment.

IJN is currently the only hospital in Malaysia to offer heart and lung transplantation and mechanical heart implantation, supported by a highly trained, multi-disciplinary team. After pioneering heart and lung transplants in Malaysia in 1997 and 2005 respectively, IJN became the first in the country to perform a mechanical heart implantation in 2005. IJN also carried out its first heart-lung transplant in 2007. To date, the centre has successfully performed 29 heart transplants, 6 lung transplants, 6 heart-lung transplants, 36 LVAD implantations, and 7 LVAD-to-heart-transplant procedures.

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"We are proud to celebrate these two medical victories, especially after a hiatus in transplant surgeries due to the scarcity of organ donors," said IJN chief executive officer Datuk Dr Aizai Azan Abdul Rahim. "This success is also testament to the strength of our community. We're grateful to the various parties who have helped us transform the lives of these young patients, including the Ministry of Health, the National Transplant Resource Center (NTRC), the Fire and Rescue Department (Bomba) as well as the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM)."

While these two latest heart transplants highlight IJN's strength in managing complex heart cases, they also underscore the critical need for increased organ donor participation in Malaysia. At IJN alone, there are currently 22 patients awaiting suitable donors to receive life-saving transplants.

IJN chairman Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Health for its support of IJN's Heart, Lung Transplant and Mechanical Heart Programme. "The ministry's support and grants for this programme have benefitted 77 patients thus far. We hope that this collaboration continues to help us offer life-saving opportunities for even more patients, and greatly welcome potential partnerships with the corporate sector for this cause as well," he said.

Reiterating the profound impact organ donation has on individuals and families, Tan Sri Noor Hisham added: "Every registered organ donor has the potential to turn despair into hope. By simply signing up, you too can give the gift of life to patients in need."

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About the IJN Heart, Lung Transplant and Mechanical Heart Programme

Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) began its Heart, Lung Transplant and Mechanical Heart Programme in 1995, with the support of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. The programme saw its first achievement in 1997, with IJN specialists performing the first heart transplant in Malaysia. This centre followed up this feat by subsequently carrying out the country's first lung transplantation and LVAD implantation in 2005, as well as Malaysia's first heart and lung transplantation in 2007.

In 2002, IJN received a grant from the National Economic Action Council (*Majlis Tindakan Ekonomi Negara* or MTEN) to advance mechanical heart procedures, showcasing IJN's commitment to innovative solutions. In 2005, the centre went on to successfully carry out the first mechanical heart implantation in Malaysia.

With its multidisciplinary team of specialists, ongoing dedication to research and innovation, IJN has built a wealth of expertise in heart and lung transplantation. Thus far, the centre has successfully performed 29 heart transplants, 6 lung transplants, 6 heart-lung transplants, 36 left ventricular assist device (LVAD) implantations, and 7 LVAD-to-heart-transplant procedures.

IJN Heart, Lung Transplant and Mechanical Heart Programme also has received grants from the Ministry of Health to further expand its scope and benefit more patients. IJN remains committed to transforming lives through comprehensive heart and lung care.

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