

THE URGENT OFFERING SYSTEM IN THE UK: ADULT PATIENTS

FM Seeney¹, JH Dark², RL Potter¹, CJ Rudge¹

¹ UK Transplant, Bristol, UK, ² Freeman Hospital, Newcastle, UK

Background: Despite previous misgivings over possible poor outcome and inefficient use of organs, the UK introduced an urgent scheme for adult heart transplants on 1 April 1999. It enables centres to register needy or rapidly deteriorating patients to receive priority over other more stable patients in the organ offering process. Such a scheme can only remain viable if the outcome of urgent heart grafts is acceptable.

Methods: Data on 56 adult patients registered for urgent heart transplants between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2002 were obtained from the UK National Transplant Database. Registration outcomes (transplant, death or removal) were monitored. Three-month patient survival was estimated using Kaplan-Meier methods.

Results: Of 56 adult urgent patients registered, 41 were transplanted, 2 died while waiting and 13 were removed from the waiting list. Patients were removed when they became too ill, 7, or recovered sufficiently to return to the elective list, 6. Urgent patients were on average 40 years of age (range 17-60 years) compared with 47 (range 16-67 years) for elective patients. Those removed from the list were a similar age: 43 years (range 17-60 years) for urgent patients, 48 (range 18-67 years) for elective. Three-month patient survival of those transplanted was 87% (95% CI 78%-98%). This compares favourably with elective transplants over the same period: 85% (95% CI 81%-88%) for 430 adults.

Conclusions: Early urgent survival is at least as good as that for elective transplants. This good survival coupled with the fact that the scheme only used 9% of usable donor hearts in this period justifies the continuation of the scheme.