

OUTCOME FOR URGENT PAEDIATRIC HEART TRANSPLANTS IN THE UK

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Background: Since 1 April 1999 the UK has operated urgent offering schemes for both adult and paediatric candidates. These enable centres to register needy or rapidly deteriorating patients to receive priority over other more stable patients in the organ offering process. Such schemes can only remain viable if the outcome of urgent heart grafts is acceptable.

Methods: Data on 56 adult and 58 paediatric 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 the Kaplan-Meier method.

Results: Most adult patients were transplanted: 41 transplanted, 2 died waiting, 13 removed. 35 paediatric patients received an urgent heart transplant but 12 died on the list and 11 were removed. Half, 5, of the paediatric patients who died were aged under one year and a further 2 were one year old. Most, 11, of the paediatric deaths were for patients registered in the first two years of the scheme. Three-month patient survival was 94% (95% CI 85%-100%) for 32 paediatric recipients of an urgent first heart graft. This compares favourably with elective heart transplants over the same period: 98% (95% CI 93%-100%) for 44 paediatric recipients.

Conclusions: The paediatric scheme is very successful and short-term outcome is excellent. However, there remains a significant problem with matching donor hearts in the infant group. Now that the programme is fully established deaths on the urgent waiting list have been almost eliminated.