

New procedure speeds recovery for kidney donors ** Lehigh Valley Hospital now uses laparoscope, smaller incision.

[FIRST Edition]

Morning Call - Allentown, Pa.

Author: Ann Wazelek Of The Morning Call

Date: Oct 19, 2002

Start Page: B.9

Section: LOCAL

Text Word Count: 312

Document Text

Giving someone a new kidney just got a little easier for donors at Lehigh Valley Hospital, Salisbury Township.

Transplant surgeon Pradip Chakrabarti on Wednesday used a scope and small incision to remove a healthy kidney for transplantation.

Instead of a large U-shaped incision that wraps around one side of a donor's waist, or 7-inch midsize incision in back, the scope permits the kidney to be removed through a separate 4-inch opening.

Smaller incisions heal faster, permitting shorter hospital stays and quicker recoveries.

Although other kidney transplant centers have been performing the operation, called a "laparoscopic nephrectomy" for years, LVH had used it only to remove diseased kidneys.

Dr. Craig Reckard, the transplant surgeon who started LVH's program, said he was not interested in offering the procedure earlier, because at the time he was the only transplant surgeon on staff and did not want to assume the risks.

"With a small program you can't take a lot of risks," he said, considering the midsize incision comparable. "It's clear now, that results [of laparoscopic kidney removal] are reasonably good." Half of all U.S. kidney transplant centers now offer donor kidney removals through the laparoscope.

During Wednesday's operation at LVH, Craig Bilger of Quakertown donated a kidney to Lee Arn of Trumbauersville, a friend since middle school.

Both are 25, attended Quakertown Community High School and shared an interest in motocross motorcycle and bicycle racing.

The procedure's smaller incision should permit Bilger to return to his job driving a tractor-trailer in several weeks instead of months. He offered to be tested as a donor after Arn's kidneys failed in January 2001 and Bilger saw how tired his friend got after dialysis three times a week.

"He's like a brother to me," Bilger said. "I'm trying to make his life normal."

Said Arn about Bilger, "He's a good guy who would bend over backwards for you."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

"With a small program you can't take a lot of risks," he said, considering the midsize incision comparable. "It's clear now, that results [of laparoscopic kidney removal] are reasonably good." Half of all U.S. kidney transplant centers now offer donor kidney removals through the laparoscope.

The procedure's smaller incision should permit [Craig Bilger] to return to his job driving a tractor-trailer in several weeks instead of months. He offered to be tested as a donor after [Lee Arn]'s kidneys failed in January 2001 and Bilger saw how tired his friend got after dialysis three times a week.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.