New Study Tracks Kidney Transplants Between People With HIV

It's the NIH's first large-scale clinical trial on the subject. Plus: Meet organ transplant advocate Mo Murray [VIDEO].

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HIV-positive to HIV-positive organ transplants have been taking place in the United States since 2016, but now we're seeing the launch of the first large-scale clinical trial to follow the outcomes of such operations, in this case kidney transplants.

Titled the HOPE (HIV Organ Policy Equity) in Action Multicenter Kidney Study, the clinical trial is sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

According to an NIH press release, the study will follow 160 kidney transplants. All the recipients will be living with HIV; 80 of them will receive kidneys from HIV-positive donors, and 80 will receive kidneys from HIV-negative donors. Researchers will examine a number of variables, such as changes in the participants' viral reservoir and the potential for HIV superinfection.

Christine Durand, MD, of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, is the study's principal investigator. "If proven safe and effective in our study," she said in the press release, "kidney transplants between people with HIV may result in people living with HIV receiving donated organs sooner and the overall organ transplant waiting list shrinking—to the benefit of everyone who needs a kidney transplant, regardless of HIV status."

Because of side effects of HIV and its meds, people living with the virus are in greater need of liver and kidney transplants, especially as they live longer thanks to more effective antiretroviral treatments.

But until recent years, they had to wait on lists to receive organs from HIV-negative donors, a process that could take years.

The passage in 2013 of the HOPE Act lifted a 1988 ban on procuring organs from HIV-positive donors and allowing their transplantation to other people living with HIV. What's more, until recently, such transplants could involve only deceased donors. But now, living HIV-positive people

can donate their organs. For more about that, click here.

Now that the HOPE in Action Multicenter Kidney Study has been launched, the NIH is reviewing a proposal for a similar liver study. Mo Murray, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1987 and had a liver transplant, is now an advocate for HIV organ transplants. You can watch his story in the NIAID video above.

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