HIV-Positive Organ Transplant Sets Medical Precedent

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In late September, doctors at the Groote Schuur hospital in Cape Town, South Africa, performed the world's first organ transplant between an HIV-positive donor and a positive recipient, *The Guardian* reports.

The operation transplanted the HIV-infected kidneys from one donor into two men. In a country where one in five adults lives with HIV, the previous block on HIV-positive transplants had caused South African authorities to dispose of almost a third of organs due to the potential donor's HIV status.

"HIV patients are at a disadvantage when it comes to getting an organ and dialysis. Even when we try to be fair, they are at a disadvantage competing with people with no chronic illness," said Elmi Muller, the surgeon who performed the operation. "This study opens up an opportunity to help them, even gives them a slight advantage because of the high number of HIV-positive donors."

Muller believes the operation could lead to the transplant of other vital organs from positive donors, particularly the liver, which is often vulnerable to damage by HIV medications.

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