Organ Transplants Between HIV-Positive People Allowed for First Time

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Meet Dorry Segev, MD, PhD, a transplant surgeon, in this introductory video from the Johns Hopkins Medicine directory. Segev spearheaded a campaign to end the ban on HIV-positive organ transplants.

Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore is the first U.S. hospital given approval to perform organ transplants involving HIV-positive donors and HIV-positive recipients, CNN reports.

Until recently, it was illegal to use the organs of HIV-positive people in transplants, even if the recipient was also living with HIV. But when the HIV Organ Policy Equity, or HOPE Act, passed in 2013, the prohibition was lifted.

As a result, more than 1,000 lives could be saved. Dorry Segev, MD, PhD, associate professor of surgery at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, tells CNN that there are between 500 and 600 HIV-positive would-be donors in the United States each year; a University of Pennsylvania study puts the number close to 400.

The reason for the two-year lag between the passage of the HOPE Act and the approval for HIV-positive transplants was because the National Institutes of Health had to create guidelines and safeguards for the procedures.

The precise date of the transplant operations will depend on when an organ is available and a match is found.

Johns Hopkins was approved to do HIV-positive kidney and HIV-positive liver transplants by the United Network for Organ Sharing.

Read POZ's March 2012 cover story "The Right to Give Life" to learn about one couple's battle to overturn the ban on HIV-positive organ transplants

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