

## EDITORIAL

# Starting a Liver Transplant Program in Turkey; Akdeniz University Model

Türkiye’de karaciğer transplantasyonu programı: Akdeniz Üniversitesi Modeli

See article on TJG 19 (1): 28-32

In this issue of Turkish Journal of Gastroenterology, authors presented the first one hundred liver transplantations performed between January 2000 to January 2007 at Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey (1). They compared the patient survival in two different time periods: The 1 year and 3 year patient survival rates were %67.3 and %54.3 in the beginning of the program, and %88.7, %79.3 between the years 2004-2007, respectively. They presented demographic and operative data and found that the operative mortality in the second era was significantly lower ( $p<0.02$ ). They concluded that with experience the success of liver transplantation would improve.

Although the first successful liver transplantation was performed by Starzl in 1967, almost one hundred thousand liver transplants have been performed all around the world since that date. Early patient survival was less than %20 in the first twenty years. It went up to 90% with better surgical techniques, discovery of new immunosuppressive, antimicrobial, antiviral, antifungal medications, new development of organ preservation techniques and better patient care and follow-up in the OR and ICU.

Let us not forget that almost all the liver transplant surgeons in Turkey have been trained abroad. Only a few of these surgeons had the opportunity of getting their training in an approved liver transplant center. Akdeniz University’s administration committed to start and develop a multi organ transplant center. For this reason, the University had been sending its doctors abroad to be trained in this field. The first OPO (Organ Procurement Organization) along with a few other centers also exist in this University.

For those reasons cited above, Akdeniz University in Antalya is the best Organ procurement organization in Turkey (The OPO rate in Turkey is 1.5 per million and in Antalya 18 per million population). In order to have a successful Transplant program, it is crucial to have a dynamic and successful OPO. Akdeniz University has achieved these criteria.

In my opinion, the Universities in Turkey that are performing transplants or are planning to start programs, should take Akdeniz University as their role model. They should keep in mind that it is absolutely necessary to have a good and very successful OPO program. Unfortunately many centers in Turkey still don’t have organ procurement coordinators. There are many universities trying to perform an organ transplant but could not even have a single donor in their hospital ICU in one year! Without ORGANS there will be NO TRANSPLANTS. It is as simple as this. OPO is extremely important for the organ transplant centers.

There is no question that to transplant a liver from a cadaveric donor gives better results and is easier to perform than the live donor livers or split livers. Akdeniz University surgeons started live donor and split liver program after they performed 90 cadaveric liver transplants. I started mine after 1.000 cadaveric liver transplants! One needs experience to be able to do live donor transplants.

Transplantation, especially liver transplantation, is a teamwork procedure. The team players have to be able to get along well and work well together in order to achieve a successful program. They need commitment, good leadership, support from their peers, the media and the public. They have to follow the recent publications, compare and share their results with the others.

Akdeniz University Liver Transplant Program should be congratulated for their achievement in their first one hundred consecutive liver transplants.

## REFERENCE

1. Dinçkan A, Türkyılmaz S, Tekin A. et al. Evaluation of the first 100 liver transplantations. *Turk J Gastroenterol* 2008; 19: 28-32.

Münci KALAYOĞLU

*Chairman of Department of Surgery and Transplant Memorial Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey*