Mumbai clocks 200 organ transplants

MUMBAI: It’s one milestone the city can take pride in. The number of lifesaving transplants performed with cadaveric organs crossed 200 this year — an important leap in the city’s two-decade old organ donation programme that started with nine transplants in 1997.

This year, 73 families have donated organs of deceased loved ones, facilitating 208 transplants. The first time the city achieved 100 cadaveric transplants in one year was in 2014, or 18 years after the programme started. Compared to that, the 200-transplants-a year milestone came within six years, thanks to increasing awareness, identifying and notifying brain deaths and allowing non-transplant centres to retrieve organs.
Doctors say the growing numbers are crucial as a cadaver organ not only saves the person desperately in need of it, but also protects a healthy family member of the patient from losing an organ. In 2019, kidney donations accounted for over 50% of organs donated, while a third were livers. Lung and heart donations made up for a considerable part of the remaining pie. The year also saw pancreas and multiple bone donations. Mumbai has also contributed to over 50% of the total transplants in the state, which currently is on top of the country’s list with 142 donations.

“More than anything it gives us hope that a lot more can be achieved through this altruistic programme,” said Dr SK Mathur, president of Zonal Transplant Coordination Committee (ZTCC), the body that distributes cadaver organs among hospitals.

Dombivli resident Vijay Karande vividly remembers the day he received a call from Thane’s Jupiter Hospital informing that a
cadaver liver was available for his brother Vinay (34). It was around 11.30pm and Vinay had returned from his fourth hospitalisation in May. “He entered home and broke down. He said he could no longer bear the pain and hospital visits. The moment he got an organ was like all of us getting a new lease of life,” said Vijay.

The picture is dismal for those not so fortunate. “At the state-level, over 410 solid organ transplants have been made possible by donations, but the demand-supply gap remains huge,” said Dr AL Gajiwal, director, Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation. In Mumbai, nearly 4,500 people are on the organs wait list. Also, the lack of participation of public hospitals is a major weakness. Dr Ramesh Bharmal, director of BMC’s major hospitals, said that all teaching hospitals—KEM, Sion, Nair—have committees for certifying brain death. “As and when a family is willing to donate, we facilitate it,” he said. But apparently not a single family has consented to donate in a public hospital this year.