Bengaluru: Man saves sister-in-law by donating kidney

BENGALURU: A 34-year-old woman from Bengaluru who suffered from acute kidney failure was suggested a transplant. Evaluation showed her husband couldn’t be a donor as their blood groups didn’t match. That’s when her brother-in-law (husband’s elder brother) stepped up to donate his kidney. Divya (name changed) underwent the transplant at Columbia Asia Hospital in January. Doctors say an extended family member coming forward to donate a kidney for a woman is very rare.

Divya’s creatinine level was high in 2015 when she was in her second pregnancy. She was diagnosed with chronic glomerulonephritis, where tiny filters in the kidney are inflamed and renal function gets affected over a long period of time. She was on dialysis since 2017. Though transplant was suggested, Divya was in denial, thinking she would be fine.

In 2019, when her condition deteriorated, her parents and husband came forward to donate their kidneys, but they weren’t deemed fit. While her father’s blood group matched, because of his comorbidities, he couldn’t donate his kidney. “My brother-in-law volunteered to donate as his blood group matched with mine,” says Divya, a mother of two kids. However, she wasn’t ready for a transplant then.

Dr Deepak Kumar, consultant nephrologist and transplant physician, Columbia Asia Referral Hospital, Yeshwanthpur, recalls when Divya’s brother-in-law Murali (name changed), 41, met him in 2019 expressing willingness to donate his kidney, he couldn’t believe it. “The state-level committee tasked with authorising living donor organ transplant approved it on realising it was an altruistic donation. But the woman was not fit to receive an organ at that time due to very low haemoglobin levels,” said Dr Kumar.
She was on dialysis for nearly four years and finally underwent the transplant on January 22, 2021. Murali, from Tumakuru, said his family supported his decision. “Currently, I'm going through divorce. My parents had no objection to organ donation. I couldn’t see my sister-in-law suffering from a kidney disorder while having to take care of two kids. My wife has taken away my son from me and I didn’t want my nephew and niece to suffer because of their mother’s condition,” he told TOI.

Dr Sankaran Sundar, past chairman of Indian Society of Nephrology, says a man donating kidney to a woman is rare. “It is even more rare to see a man do so for his sister-in-law. Over 25 years ago, I came across a man donating one to his daughter-in-law. In the Indian scenario, in over 70% cases, it’s women who are donors,” he said.

Woman preparing for IAS

Divya worked in an MNC and wanted to crack IAS exams. Though she cleared UPSC prelims in 2017, she could not take up mains. She is preparing for prelims once again. Even when she was in ICU after transplant, she wrote mock tests.