Ahmedabad Mirror News
12 March 2021
3 out of 4 living kidney donors in Guj are women

Over the past five years, a whopping 80% of the kidney donors in the State were women, figures reveal. As per data provided by the Institute for Kidney Diseases and Research Centre (IKDRC), almost three out of four kidney donors in the State are women, while four out of five recipients of the organs are men.

Doctors and other experts in the field of organ donation in the country agree that usually, the sex of donors is to balance the odds of a living transplant, donor or women, be they mothers, aunts, wives or daughters. Between 2016 and 2020, as many as 1,078 men underwent kidney transplant at IKDRC, against 251 female patients. At the same time, 812 donors of these kidneys were women, while 471 came from men, usually for their family members.

Dr Yash Kote, professor of nephrology and transplant at IKDRC and secretary of the Indian Society of Organ Transplantation (ISOT), said, "Living kidney donors are predominantly women, while recipients are male, all over the world. However, this gender disparity is more severe in developing countries like India than in the USA. Over the last 20 years, women have contributed 60% of living kidney donors in the USA, whereas in India, that figure stands at 75-80%. In India, we have been able to achieve this gender balance, but not as much in the USA." While the scenario in the USA is slightly improving, much change is required in India.

Dr Preeti Mehta, consultant of the State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), said, "This trend should be seen in light of preserving societal factors in the state. We have seen that women here prefer to donate their organs to men in the family because they want the benefactor to be in the family, mostly the men, so they are happy." Among women, marriage is a major factor affecting the live donation quotient. Often, women may be undergoing dialysis for years, but will refuse to accept kidneys from male members as they believe the men need it more. This perception must change.

Adding to the gloomy scenario, the post-operative period is longer than the pre-operative period, and the results are not as good as those of men. Living donors usually provide the best results, while a few early failures can be seen in women. This is attributed to the fact that their hearts are not as strong as men. Though this scenario is slightly improving, it is too early to comment on these results.

Reducing disparity

Speaking on efforts to reduce gender disparity in live organ donation, Dr Vaishali Ramani, director of the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), said, "Unfortunately, it is true that more women than men are living donors, which needs to be rectified. We cannot do that by disappointing women from donating. Rather, we have to encourage more men to donate organs to save their wives, daughters and siblings. While efforts are being made to ensure that women are not pressured into donating their organs, social awareness and medical literacy are important to change this trend."

"Family counselling is done by doctors and transplant coordinators to remove fear of organ donation. All donor operations are done via keyhole surgery and an incision about 1-2 cm is enough to remove the kidney. A help is quick recovery of the donor without increasing in regular activities," said Dr Mehta.
Gender bias

The gender bias is quite apparent in pediatric transplants as well. Among children whose organs were donated by live donors, 85% were living men, while only 15% were women. In a study over 15 years in the country, in case of cadaver donation, 95% of recipients were males, and only 5% were females,” said Dr. Luthra.

Dr. Luthra added, “Girls are still at a disadvantage as parents are not keen on organ transplants for them. Pediatric nephrology and urology care is limited. In extensive counseling for transplant for girls and boys with limited success, I have developed a technique of robotic kidney transplant for women, where the kidney (liver transplanted) is inserted through vagina and robotic-assisted kidney transplant is carried out through small key holes. Such operations reduce post-operative pain and lead to rapid convalescence and early discharge. The same government is funding robotic kidney transplant for poor and needy patients. It is completely free for children under the School Health Programme.”

Further, bonus points are given to women even on the waiting list for cadaver organ donation. According to health experts, such a move will help women move up faster on the list and compensate for the gender bias that otherwise hampers their prospects of getting an organ. Odisha is the only state in the country promoting organ transplant for women in this way.

Prospective donors of live organs are interviewed separately and counselled by doctors and their consent is taken for retrieval of organs. If they sense coercion, they can cancel the transplant procedure at any time.