



Transplanting Skills, For Life

Success for UK charity TLC with first Transplants for children in Trinidad

TLC (Transplant Links), a UK charity, has achieved the first successful live kidney transplants for three children in Trinidad. Until now children on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago suffering from kidney failure only had the prospect of life on a kidney dialysis machine. But thanks to the efforts of TLC a collaboration has set up between the medical centre there and a UK team of transplant experts who were able to perform and teach the operations. The team has just returned following the live transplants from two Mums and one Uncle of children with kidney failure. Whilst adults have received transplants in the past there, the skills did not exist to expand the service to children so the TLC team from the UK have provided a milestone in paediatric care on the island.

TLC is a UK registered charity set up by a group of British doctors with the goal to save the lives of children and adults in developing countries who suffer from kidney disease. Through TLC, leading UK surgeons and medical teams take their skills to countries where they are most needed, and dialysis is often not available. They work with medical teams on location helping them to develop their own expertise in running a living transplant program, allowing one member of a family to save the life of another, often their own child.

Dr Jennie Jewitt-Harris, founder and Chairman of TLC, was delighted at the success of their work in Trinidad "It was always the goal of the charity to give parents or close relatives the chance to be able to save or dramatically improve the lives of their loved ones. To be able to give this gift to these families in Trinidad has been a wonderful experience for everyone involved" said Jewitt-Harris "The expert Transplant team from Birmingham gave up their spare time to come to Trinidad and do this work. They performed the operations, and provided after-care and teaching, so that we can work towards more children benefiting from further transplants in the future"

Mr Andrew Ready, Medical Director of TLC and the chief Surgeon for the Trinidad visit said "Here in the UK when patients are diagnosed with kidney failure, they're put onto dialysis and have the opportunity for a transplant, which

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is something we tend to take for granted. That simply doesn't happen in the developing world where people are dying instead of getting treatment. It's great to have finally taken a team to make such a difference elsewhere"

The parents and families of the children were so grateful for the British team giving up their time "Thanks is a small word" said Christoph, whose daughter Shekinah received a kidney from her Mother, "but in this situation it means so very much. Our daughter has the chance to live her life again. It's hard to express how this makes us feel". All three donors recovered well and were discharged from hospital a few days after the operation thanks to the keyhole technique for removing the kidney which Ready and his team use routinely.

TLC plans to expand their work further and take UK teams to other countries in desperate need of help. "Kidney failure is tantamount to a death sentence in many developing countries where there is little or no chance for kidney dialysis or a transplant. There are often doctors with the desire to learn though, and through TLC we will set up long-term collaborations with experts in the UK to perform transplants and teach the skills" said Jewitt-Harris "Kidney failure can happen to anyone and is become more prevalent in all countries. These countries badly need our help to manage it".

Mr Ready took his theatre team from Birmingham to Trinidad, and looks forward to starting work with other countries shortly. "We have already visited Ghana where there is a desperate need for our help, and once we have raised the funds we plan to take a team there later this year" TLC relies totally on charitable donations to pay the costs of the traveling medical teams who are all volunteers using their own time. For further information, or to make a donation go to www.transplantlinks.org

The medical team joining Jennie Jewitt-Harris supporting TLC on this visit were Mr Andrew Ready (surgeon), Mr Nick Inston (surgeon) Dr Daman Mullhi (anaesthetist), Dr Paul Cockwell (Nephrologist), Dr Dwomoa Adu (Nephrologist and TLC Trustee), Adrian Shaw, Simon Nicol and Fleur Kelly (operating theatre team), Bethan Gough and Marie Walters (paediatric nurses)

For further information or for media enquiries, please go to www.transplantlinks.org or call Dr Jennie Jewitt-Harris on 07738 539633 or via email on jennie.jh@gmail.com