



(From left to right):
Altaf Hussain, Imran (Altaf's brother-in-law), Dr Prema Raj,
Dr Lui Hock Foong, Anis Abu Talib

SECOND CHANCE

At Life

“The doctors and nurses in Mount Elizabeth Hospital were friendly and helpful. Dr Prema Raj and Dr Lui were extremely patient and explained to me very clearly what I needed to know about the transplant surgery until I understood, no matter how long it took. I could call them anytime – which I did several times – in the middle of the night!”

~Altaf Hussain~

Businessman Altaf Hussain gets a new lease of life after he successfully underwent a liver transplant in Singapore.

53-year-old Altaf had been suffering from liver problems for almost five years which often left him feeling tired and in pain. Since 2005 when he first felt a sharp pain in his abdomen, Altaf who is from Karachi had sought treatment for his liver in a few countries - in his own hometown, in the United Arab Emirates and in United Kingdom (UK).

He was diagnosed as suffering from decompensated liver cirrhosis – which is cirrhosis with no known cause (cryptogenic cirrhosis). Decompensated cirrhosis means that the liver is extensively scarred and unable to function properly. People with decompensated liver cirrhosis eventually develop many symptoms and complications that can be life-threatening. They develop a variety of symptoms such as fatigue, exhaustion, loss of appetite, nausea, jaundice, weight loss, stomach pain, impotence, bruising and bleeding, and other potentially life threatening symptoms.

Then six months ago, his doctor in UK told him that he had end stage liver failure and he needed a transplant soon. “By then I was constantly in pain. And it was hard for me to go to work. I felt very tired and was in bed most of the time,” says Altaf. After receiving the devastating news, he and his family asked around for where to go for the transplant because it was too expensive to do transplantation in UK. Moreover, it was not available in Pakistan. A friend recommended he checked out the medical facilities in Singapore.

Then, his closely-knit family got together to discuss who would be a potential and willing donor. It came down to his wife’s nephew, Anis Abu Talib, 24, who had tests done and was found to be a suitable donor.

In September 2009, Altaf came down to Singapore. He went to two hospitals in Singapore before deciding on Mount Elizabeth Hospital which is one of the three hospitals operated by ParkwayHealth in Singapore. He first consulted Dr Lui Hock Foong, a gastroenterologist from ParkwayHealth who confirmed the UK doctor's diagnosis that Altaf had advanced liver cirrhosis after running a series of tests. "Altaf's condition was far advanced and he needed a liver transplant," says Dr Lui. Altaf was then referred to liver transplant surgeon Dr Prema Raj who ran an extensive pre-operative assessment which included blood tests, x-rays and scans.

In December, Altaf returned to Singapore with Anis, accompanied by a few members of their families. Anis underwent a thorough screening to make sure that his liver would be a good match for Altaf. Both donor and recipient also had to undergo a psychological preparation and assessments by a Transplant Ethics Committee. A report was then submitted to the Singapore's Ministry of Health for their approval to go ahead with the transplant.

The transplant took place early on 26 January 2010 with two teams of doctors including six surgeons and three anaesthetists – one team to harvest a part of the liver from Anis, and the other to transplant the liver into Altaf – at two different operating theatres. The surgery on Altaf took almost all of 12 hours – from 9.30am to 8.30pm.

Anis was up on his feet a few days after donating his liver, and was discharged from hospital after a week. Altaf, on the other hand, was out of hospital about three weeks after his transplant surgery.

Dr Prema Raj explains that in a living donor liver transplant, the donor's liver would grow back to its original size after about six weeks. In about the same time, the liver which has been transplanted would grow to the size of the recipient's liver before it was removed.

Altaf is presently taking three types of anti-rejection drugs. According to Dr Prema Raj, if Altaf continues to do as well as he is now after one year, he would only need to take one type of anti-rejection medication.

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Altaf returned to Pakistan on 5 March 2010 not only with a new liver but also a new perspective on life. "Without the gift of a liver from Anis, and the wonderful care from Mount Elizabeth Hospital's team of doctors and nurses, I wouldn't be alive today," he stresses.

ParkwayHealth Liver Transplant Programme

The Liver Transplant Programme at ParkwayHealth offers a complete range of medical and surgical interventions to treat patients with complex liver disorders including liver disease management, end-stage disease management and liver transplantation. It is made up of a multi-disciplinary team of specialists designed to give comprehensive and personalised care to transplant patients.

Living Donor Liver Transplant (LDLT)

LDLT eliminates the indefinite wait for cadaveric liver donors. It can be performed on anyone with end-stage liver disease regardless of the original cause of their disease.



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