Liver Transplantation: The European Experience

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ABSTRACT

Background

Data from the European Liver Transplant Registry, was used to analyze the disease pattern among patients treated with liver transplantation in Europe, and the results with the procedure. The first European liver transplantation was performed in Cardiff, England in 1968 and until the mid 1980's only few such procedures were performed. After the introduction of cyclosporine in the early 1980's, there has been a steady increase and in the last few years just under 3000 transplantations have been performed each year. By the end of 1994 there have been a total of 18,057 liver transplantations performed in 15,883 patients at some 90 hospitals in Europe. With the exception of a handful of cases, orthotopic liver transplantation have been performed, that is the diseased liver has been replaced with a healthy one.

Results

In two thirds of the recipients, the underlying Liver disease was cirrhosis. The other third was made up of patients with liver cancer, acute hepatic failure, cholestatic disease and metabolic disease. The one year overall patient survival rate for 1994 was 80.5%. The five year survival rate varied depending on the patient group. In adult patients below 45 years of age, the figure was 67% and for patients above 60 it was 57%. Patients with cirrhosis, the largest group, had a 5 year survival rate of almost 70%. Patients who had alcoholic cirrhosis, primary binary cirrhosis and post-hepatic cirrhosis had similar survival figures. In patients with hepatitis B the results were inferior with many patients developing recurrence of the disease in the new liver. More recently, long term treatment with immunoglobulins has, however, improved the survival rate. With acute hepatic failure the 5 year survival figure was 54% and with cancer it was 39%. Institutions where more than 24 liver transplantations are performed each year had a 5 year survival rate of 77%: those that perform less than 24, the figure was 71%.

Conclusions

Liver transplantation provides highly satisfactory results in most patient groups. Factors found to influence the results were patient disease, patient age and the level of experience at the center. The affect of age was, however, less than expected.

Reference:

1 Liver Transplant Registry Report, 1995. (Director Dr. H. Bismuth, Hospital Paul-Brousse), Paris, France.