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Heart

IJN PERFORMS FIRST HEART TRANSPLANT IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 19 (Bernama) -- The National Heart Institute (IJN) successfully carried out the first heart transplant in Malaysia yesterday on a 51-year-old male patient.

The recipient is a technician diagnosed with "end-stage heart failure" and has been on the heart transplant waiting list for the last seven months, the hospital announced today.

Details of the donor were not revealed.

The four-hour operation, from 4pm to 8pm, was undertaken by a team of 17 headed by IJN's cardiothoracic surgery chief Datuk Dr Yahya Awang.

"We are pleased to inform that the patient is progressing well and to our expectation. The patient is currently being closely monitored in the Intensive Care Unit," Dr Yahya told reporters.

The heart transplant team comprised three surgeons, three anaesthetists, four cardiologists and other supporting staff.

"We had been preparing for this for the last two years, and we were glad that everything went smoothly as expected," said Dr Yahya who was also the surgeon who performed a bypass on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed in 1989.

He said the patient was doing well and was now awake and breathing on his own but still in intensive care.

"He is still under intensive monitoring and he will be in the intensive care for at least a few more days," he said.

Asked whether any difficulty was encountered during the operation, Dr Yahya said: "There were no significant problems and everything went as expected and we are quite happy with it."

IJN consultant cardiothoracic surgeon Datuk Dr Ahmad Sallehuddin said the institute was informed by a hospital here about the donor at about 10am yesterday and then started preparations for the transplant.

The recipient was chosen from four patients on the waiting list. He was selected based on the blood group and size of his body.

Dr Ahmad said at 3.30pm, a team of doctors and nurses from IJN went to the hospital to remove the heart from the donor who had also pledged to give away his two kidneys.

The heart was then brought back to the IJN and transplanted onto the recipient.

Dr Yahya said the facilities used were the same as for the routine open heart surgery procedure except for certain extra monitoring, drugs and equipment.

He said the IJN had carried out experimental work and conducted transplants on 11 sheep before this in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

On the donor, Dr Yahya said the IJN expressed its deepest condolences to the family members of the donor and hoped that they would be consoled through the fact that they had done a noble deed which had helped to save another life.

There are 20,000 heart patients in the country and about 1,000 of them need heart transplant. There are about 7,000 people who have pledged to donate their heart and kidneys. -- BERNAMA

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