
ICU Volume 15 - Issue 1 - 2015 - News

"Second wind" from Vienna – 25 Years of Lung Transplants

25 years of lung transplantation was marked at the Medical University of Vienna and Vienna General Hospital (AKH Wien) on 6 March with a celebration and symposium. The first lung transplantation was performed at the medical faculty of the University of Vienna in November 1989. 25 years later the Medical University of Vienna/ AKH Wien is one of the four world-leading centres for lung transplantation along with Hannover, Toronto and Cleveland. 120 patients a year receive their "second wind" from Vienna, and all donated lungs from Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Estonia are also transplanted here, as these countries do not have transplant centres themselves. Around two-thirds of the lungs transplanted in Vienna come from these eight cooperating countries with a total of 63 million inhabitants.



"Since we receive more lungs than we require, it is a win-win situation for all. For patients in Austria, for those affected in these countries and for the Eurotransplant region. The whole world is envious of us for this reason," said Walter Klepetko, who was appointed Head of the Lung Transplantation Programme of MedUni Wien and the AKH Wien and Head of the Clinical Department for Thoracic Surgery from the outset.

The large quantity of donor lungs is also conducive for researchers at the Medical University of Vienna to perform studies and develop or apply new operation techniques. Around four years ago, for example, an ex-vivo lung perfusion was applied for the first time at the Clinical Department for Thoracic Surgery at the Medical University of Vienna / AKH Wien. Austria is among the first countries in which this concept has been successfully employed. With the ex-vivo lung perfusion system, the lung can be accurately assessed and "repaired". Lungs which would previously not have been used for transplantation are connected to a ventilator and rinsed, after which they display in this system an impressive improvement in organ function, and can therefore be transplanted in an optimum condition.

The indications that can be remedied through the use of a donor lung have greatly expanded. COPD and emphysema are the largest group at around 35 percent. Around 20 percent of those affected suffer from pulmonary fibrosis, and 15 percent of these patients also suffer from cystic fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension.

Published on : Sat, 14 Mar 2015