

Liver Cirrhosis and Liver Cancer Cured: A Thanksgiving Story

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Liver cirrhosis and liver cancer can be cured by liver transplantation. Here is one successful case. A mid 50-year-old gentleman came to my clinic asking for help because he was notified by Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) Liver Transplant Center that he was removed from their transplant list. I was very surprised to hear it because he met all the criteria for liver transplant. He had liver cirrhosis with recurrent GI bleeding, refractory ascites, for which he had liver venous shunt (TIPS) placed in VUMC. He had frequent hospitalizations in the local hospital recently for hepatic encephalopathy, a brain syndrome caused by intestinal toxins which was no longer degraded by failed liver. He had been treated and followed by VUMC transplant team and stayed on the liver transplant list for more than 4 years. With all his liver problems, he should be on top of the liver transplant list now.

I asked him why he was dropped off the life-saving list. Sad and hopeless, he told me that it was because VUMC transplant team had not received two consecutive required tests from his local physician. I contacted the transplant team, explained the situation, and expressed my concern over the urgency of liver transplant to save his life. I urged them to put him back onto the list and pledged to do everything to make sure that he is compliant with their instruction and would timely report all requested test results to them. Two months later, he came back to my clinic from VUMC and was very excited to tell me that he was placed number one on the liver transplant list in his blood and tissue type.

The following several months was very difficult for him. Despite optimal medical management, he had multiple admissions to the hospital because of hepatic encephalopathy, which can be triggered by any deviation from strict diet or infection. Three months later, he developed severe hepatic encephalopathy due to urinary tract infection and sepsis and became comatose. It was worth noting that he has received tremendous love and support from his family and friends, who have been very supportive and constantly praying for him. In the most critical condition, he was immediately transferred to VUMC and then, miracle happened. On the second day after transfer, he received the liver transplant. He came back to my clinic just two weeks later, looking like a new man! He was continuously followed by transplant team and his immune-suppression medication was completely stopped 8 months after the transplant. He is now living a healthy life as any other normal person and enjoying every minute of his new life. He is truly grateful for the love and support from his family and friends who helped him through his difficult times and thanks God for answering their prayers!

Liver transplant has become the last resort for liver failure due to acute or chronic liver diseases. It is also used to treat liver cancer which meets Milan Criteria. It is the best and most successful among all organ transplants including kidney, lung, heart and pancreas. Patients with successful liver transplant do not need life-time immune-suppression medications which usually cause severe and difficult side effects. They can usually live like normal people.

If you have any questions about liver diseases including liver cirrhosis or cancer, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, North Atlanta Medical & Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help!