

New technique improves outcome for living donor liver transplants

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The University of Alberta Hospital (UAH) is one of only a few centers in Canada that perform living donor liver transplantation, a surgical procedure developed in the late 1980s that expands the organ donor pool. About 80 liver transplants are done a year in Alberta, 10 of those being living-donor.

All potential liver transplant donors are assessed based on considerations such as the size and composition of the liver and vascular and bile duct anatomy. Thanks to a review paper done at the University of Alberta radiologists at the University of Alberta Hospital are now using CT (Computed Tomography) imaging for living-donor liver transplantation. This technique shows relevant liver anatomy and, in particular, enhances high resolution imaging of the vital bile duct anatomy.

“CT scans provide a clear image of the important ducts we need to see,” said Dr. Gavin Low, a clinical fellow in the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and author of a recent study describing this process. In the past radiologists have only been using an MRI to scan possible donors for bile duct anatomy, but Low said that, “By using CT imaging the results are much more accurate and reliable for the surgeons.”

Right now possible donors are screened with both MRI and CT scans but Low says the hope is to one day only use CT imaging; adding, “All-in-one imaging will speed up the process and make living-donor evaluation more convenient for potential donors.”

As many as four patients are evaluated by CT imaging every month.

Source: University of Alberta

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