

# Take heart, givers more than takers at AIIMS

DurgeshNandan.Jha  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** It is an embarrassment of riches in an area where recipients normally outnumber donors, but the heart transplant wing of AIIMS has a happy crisis on hand: it has people ready to donate hearts but no patients in certain blood groups awaiting transplants. This, officials say, is because the transplant wing has exhausted its needy list, treating eight of them in just four and a half months.

Dr Balram Airan, professor and head of the cardiothoracic and vascular sciences (CTVS) at AIIMS, confirmed this. He told TOI that there were no potential recipients now on the waiting list for the B+ and AB+ blood groups.

"In the past one month,

there have been at least two instances when we had to turn away heart donors, including an 18-year-old boy in Indore," Dr Airan said.

The possibility of organs being available has spurred the institute to urge the needy to register for the procedure. AIIMS also plans to write to medical colleges and hospitals with no transplant facility to forward names and details of potential recipients.

AIIMS first conducted a heart transplant in 1994, but due to the lack of availability of donors, less than 40 patients received new hearts in the next two decades. 2015 and 2016 have been different though. In 2015, officials said five patients successfully received donor hearts at the institute. "Families of nine brain-dead patients consented to donate their hearts last

## HEART OF THE MATTER

A cardiac transplant is a surgery to replace a person's diseased heart with a healthy donor heart. Most transplants are done on patients with end-stage heart failure

The first heart transplant took place in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1967

### INDIAN SCENARIO

- ▶ AIIMS conducted the country's first transplant in 1994
- ▶ Unavailability of donors led to a slowdown of transplants in India
- ▶ In 2014 and 2015, the institute conducted less than 10 heart transplants
- ▶ This year, eight heart

transplants have been conducted so far

- ▶ AIIMS is now seeking registration of heart failure patients given the fact that there are more donor requests than recipients for certain blood groups, such as B+ and AB+



year. However, four organs could not be used due to their clinical condition," a hospital official said.

According to Dr Sandeep

Seth, professor of cardiology at AIIMS, around one million people in India suffer from end-stage heart failure at any given time. "The num-

ber of patients requiring heart transplant would be at least 1,000," he said. "However, less than 50 are able to undergo the procedure not only because of the cost involved but also because there are few donors."

After successful surgery, a recipient can expect to live for over a decade. The longest post-transplant survivor enjoyed 33 extra years, said doctors.

Some private hospitals in Delhi/NCR also carry out heart transplants, but the costs are much higher than at AIIMS, said doctors.

"At AIIMS, a heart transplant costs less than Rs 1 lakh. For BPL patients, it is done free. In private hospitals, the procedure costs more than Rs 10 lakh. The cost of immunosuppressive medications is also very high," said Dr Seth said.