Lung transplantation in cystic fibrosis pediatric population myth or reality

Since November 2005, our healthcare approaches and their underlying principles have been revised.

Liou et al. reported improved survival for only 5 out of 514 patients (1%) in the pediatric CF population listed for lung transplantation in the USA [1]. They reached the conclusion that prolongation of life by means of lung transplantation should not be expected in children with cystic fibrosis.

The informative 1% figure addresses the crucial issue of innovative practices and their predictability. The practice of medicine is viewed as a fundamental and social science embracing statistical and human parameters that cannot be reduced to probability measurements. Such measurements play a highlighting and clarifying role but cannot suffice to transcribe the actual data of post-transplant survival. Thus, the quantified criteria of the patient’s quality of life should be questioned: which aspects should be included or deleted? At this stage, two approaches should be delineated: either to make a rash decision and mark a temporary pause in this current practice or to provide enlightening criticism so as to understand the reasons behind such poor results. At first sight, this retrospective study has two evidently biased approaches resting on the two-group population studied and the lung allocation score (LAS) used. The former lay on an irrelevant comparison between the listed and the not-listed groups. The latter focused on the formerly

used LAS based on the patients’ waiting time on list and not their clinical status. The former LAS was upgraded in 2005 and now focuses on the patient’s specific clinical status and disease.

A prospective, randomized trial using the new LAS in the USA [2] and additional studies in other countries should be carried out that might highlight acceptable results in CF pediatric lung transplantation.

References


Redha Souilamas
Director of the Lung Transplant Programme
Europeen Georges Pompidou Hospital
E-mail address: redha.souilamas@egp.aphp.fr.

23 February 2008