

# Blood test could show transplant rejection

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A blood test may replace invasive biopsies that heart transplant patients in the United States and elsewhere undergo to check for rejection, heart experts say.

The international team evaluated the blood test that analyzes a patient's genes and said it can accurately detect the absence of heart transplant rejection, according to data reported in an editorial the team wrote. The editorial was posted in the online edition of the Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation.

The genetic-expression profiling test not only is less invasive and less risky than a biopsy, "it also monitors the absence of organ rejection and raises suspicion of damage before any damage to the heart happens. Biopsy records damage that has already occurred," said senior author Mario Deng, director of cardiac transplantation research and associate professor of clinical medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

About 30 percent of heart transplant patients reject their new heart at least once in the first year post-transplant. When testing reveals rejection, a patient's immunosuppressive regimen is adjusted.

The new data, however, showed that in more than 99 percent of cases, the GEP test predicted heart muscle biopsies that showed an absence of acute cellular rejection.

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