

Cleveland Clinic says first uterus transplant in US fails

March 9 2016, by Lauran Neergaard



In this Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2016, photo provided by Cleveland Clinic Center, a team of Cleveland Clinic transplant surgeons and gynecological surgeons perform the nation's first uterus transplant during a nine-hour surgery in Cleveland. On Wednesday, March 9, 2016, the hospital announced the transplant has failed, and that doctors had removed the organ. (Cleveland Clinic Center via AP)

The nation's first uterus transplant has failed, the Cleveland Clinic

announced Wednesday, saying doctors had removed the organ.

A 26-year-old woman received the transplant on Feb. 24 and seemed to be doing well, even appearing briefly at a news conference on Monday with her surgeons.

But the woman suffered a sudden complication that required surgical removal of the uterus the following day, the hospital said. The patient, identified only as Lindsey, is recovering from that operation, as doctors and pathologists try to determine what went wrong. No information about the complication was provided.

In a statement the hospital attributed to Lindsey, she said her doctors "acted very quickly to ensure my health and safety. Unfortunately I did lose the uterus to complications. However, I am doing okay and appreciate all of your prayers and good thoughts."

Other countries have tried womb transplants, and have reported some failures. Sweden reported the first successful birth in 2014, with a total of five healthy babies from nine transplants so far. The experimental technique is a new frontier that might one day offer women born without a uterus or who lost it to disease a chance at pregnancy, an alternative to adoption or surrogacy.

The failed U.S. transplant was the first of 10 planned by the Cleveland Clinic in a clinical trial, and the hospital said that study is continuing. According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, which oversees the nation's transplant system, two other hospitals have been approved for uterus transplant studies: Texas' Baylor University and Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Unlike Sweden, the Cleveland hospital decided to use organs from deceased donors rather than exposing living donors to the risk of

surgery. The hospital said the organ had come from a woman in her 30s who died suddenly, and whose family provided special consent for the donation.

If any of the future experimental transplants work, participants would have to wait for a year to ensure the new uterus is healed before pregnancy even would be attempted, by in vitro fertilization using previously frozen embryos. Such transplants would be temporary, removed after one or two pregnancies so the woman wouldn't have to use anti-rejection drugs for the rest of her life.

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