A woman who received a pig kidney transplant plus a heart pump has died

July 9 2024, by Lauran Neergaard

Lisa Pisano looks at photos of her dog after her surgeries at NYU Langone Health in New York on Monday, April 22, 2024. Pisano, who received a pig kidney transplant -- along with an implanted device to keep her heart beating -- has died, her surgeon announced Tuesday, July 9, 2024. She was near death from dual kidney and heart failure when surgeons at NYU Langone Health performed the dramatic pair of surgeries. Credit: AP Photo/Shelby Lum, File
A woman who received a **pig kidney transplant**—along with an implanted device to keep her heart beating—has died, her surgeon announced Tuesday.

Lisa Pisano was near death from **kidney** and **heart failure** when surgeons at NYU Langone Health performed the dramatic pair of surgeries in April. The New Jersey woman initially seemed to be recovering well but about 47 days later, **doctors had to remove the pig kidney** and put Pisano back on dialysis after the organ was damaged by her heart medications.

Despite the dialysis and implanted heart pump, Pisano eventually entered **hospice care** and died Sunday, NYU Langone transplant surgeon Dr. Robert Montgomery said in a statement.

Montgomery praised Pisano's bravery for attempting the latest pig organ-to-human experiment, what's called xenotransplantation. The research aims to one day shore up the dire shortage of transplantable organs.

"Lisa helped bring us closer to realizing a future where someone does not have to die for another person to live," Montgomery said. "She will forever be remembered for her courage and good nature."

Back in April, the 54-year-old Pisano told The Associated Press that she knew the pig kidney might not work but "I just took a chance. And you know, **worst case scenario**, if it didn't work for me, it might have worked for someone else."

Pisano was the second patient ever to receive a kidney from a gene-edited pig. The first, **Richard "Rick" Slayman**, received his transplant at Massachusetts General Hospital and died in early May, nearly two months later. His doctor has said he died of preexisting **heart disease**, not as a result of the transplant.
More than 100,000 people are on the U.S. transplant waiting list, most who need a kidney, and thousands die waiting. Several biotech companies are genetically modifying pigs so their organs are more humanlike, less likely to be destroyed by people's immune systems.

In addition to the two pig kidney experiments, the University of Maryland also transplanted pig hearts into two men who were out of other options; both died within months.

Still, what doctors learned from those attempts, along with research in donated bodies, have them hoping to begin formal clinical trials sometime next year with patients who aren't quite so sick.

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