

Loyola patient receives one of the world's quickest lung transplants

24 April 2014, by Jim Ritter

A Loyola University Medical Center patient has received one of the world's quickest lung transplants. Kenneth Baumgardner received the transplant just six days after going on the waiting list. And he went home after spending only five days in the hospital, a remarkably short stay for such a complicated procedure.

By comparison, patients nationwide spend a median of 4.6 months on the lung transplant waiting list, and the median hospital stay is 15 days (11 days at Loyola).

"It's quite a miracle," Baumgardner said.

Dr. Daniel Dilling, Loyola's medical director of Lung Transplantation, said records aren't kept for the fastest time from transplant listing to hospital discharge, "but I have never seen or heard of a case in which the entire process was completed in only 11 days," Dilling said. "It would be nearly impossible for this to happen more quickly."

Dilling said Baumgardner's quick transplant was due to several factors, including a policy change in how lungs are allocated and a surgery and recovery that were free of the complications that are common in [lung transplants](#). "Mr. Baumgardner had a perfect surgery and recovery," Dilling said.

Dilling said a key factor in Baumgardner's recovery was his surgeon, Dr. Mamdouh Bakhos, and the experienced multidisciplinary transplant team that cared for him. Bakhos has performed more than 100 lung transplants, including the first one in Illinois. Loyola has done more than 750 lung transplants, by far the most of any center in Illinois.

Baumgardner, 67, was diagnosed in 2010 with pulmonary fibrosis, a condition in which a buildup of scar tissue in the lungs causes a progressive decline in lung function. For 12 months he was on supplemental oxygen 24/7.

Wait times for lungs are shorter than wait times for other organs because there are fewer lung transplants and thus less demand for organs. While kidney patients can wait years for organs, lung patients typically wait months.

Traditionally, lungs went to patients who had spent the longest time on the [waiting list](#). Consequently, some patients with rapidly progressing disease died before getting transplanted. In 2005, the lung allocation system was changed to give priority to patients who are the sickest. Under this new system, pulmonary fibrosis patients such as Baumgardner, who have rapidly progressing disease, are placed higher on the list.

When Baumgardner was listed, he was preparing to wait for about eight months, the median waiting time in the Gift of Hope transplant region that includes Loyola. But less than a week after he went on the list, the call came at 2:30 a.m.

"I was dumbfounded," Baumgardner said. "I couldn't believe it."

During surgery, Baumgardner fortunately did not have to be put on a heart-lung machine. Consequently, there was less risk of bleeding and fluid retention, Bakhos said. Single-lung transplant patients such as Baumgardner tend to recover more quickly than double-lung transplant [patients](#). Baumgardner's new left lung began working quickly, and his breathing tube was removed the same day as the surgery. There was no rejection and no infection complications.

Baumgardner, a retired information technology manager who lives in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., said he is breathing normally for the first time in years. He's looking forward to golfing again and to having enough stamina to play with his two grandchildren "without them tripping over my oxygen tubing."

Baumgardner's wife of 44 years, RoseAnn, and his

daughter, Carrie, are helping him recover at home. He is grateful for the many friends and family members who prayed for a successful surgery and recovery.

Baumgardner also gives thanks to Loyola's [lung transplantation](#) team. "Everyone from the secretaries to the transplant coordinators, nurses, doctors, surgeons, physical therapists and other members of the team did a great job of educating me and my family, managing our expectations and monitoring my progress," he said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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