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World's first successful living donor transplant of the middle lobe of a lung: Mother's lung saves the life of her three year old son

On 1 July 2013 surgeons at Okayama University Hospital succeeded in transplanting the middle lobe of the lung of a mother to her three year old son, who was suffering from severe lung disease. This is the world's first successful living donor transplant of the middle lobe of a lung, and the youngest lung transplant operation patient in Japan.

The operation took place because even though three years had elapsed since the revised Organ Transplant Law was passed, only two brain-dead donors under 15 had been found, giving a low chance of a lung transplant from a brain-dead donor. The doctor in charge of the boy's treatment talked with his parents, which led to the decision for the lung transplant from a living donor.

One of the striking features of this operation is that whereas the lower lobe of the lung is normally used in living donor transplants because it has the greatest capacity, here in the case of the three old boy with only a small body, an adult lower lobe would have been too large, hence the middle lobe was chosen for transplantation.

"This achievement will give courage to other children who up until now would have been unable to have transplants, said associate professor Dr. Takahiro Oto, the respiratory surgeon who performed the operation.



Dr. Takahiro Oto and his surgical team during the operation to transplant the middle lobe of a living donor's lung to a three year old boy.