

ISMETT Celebrates One-Thousandth Transplant

Celebration of ISMETT's one-thousandth transplant took place today in the Sala Domenico Lanza at the Botanic Garden in Palermo. "After 10 years of experimentation, we can say that the transfer of clinical, organizational, and management know-how has proven to be successful," said Italian Minister of Health Ferruccio Fazio. "This has resulted not only in clinical excellence, but has also had an impact on the growth of research in Sicily. In addition, patients no longer have to travel to foreign countries, or even to other Italian regions, for transplants or other advanced therapies. It has also led to the construction of one of the best cell production facilities in Europe, which will be further consolidated and developed by the Ri.MED Foundation through collaborative projects with other important facilities."

ISMETT has now performed over **1,017 transplants**. Its first transplant was done in July of 1999, the first-ever liver transplant in southern Italy. ISMETT now has transplant programs for all solid organs: liver, kidney, heart, lung, and pancreas. It has performed 653 liver transplants (96 of which were living-related), 196 kidney transplants (97 living-related), 77 heart transplants, 65 lung transplants, 4 pancreas transplants, and 22 combined transplants. This is an important achievement, and reflects the high levels of excellence attained in recent years in terms of the volume of activity and the quality of the procedures. According to statistics from the National Transplant Center, ISMETT is among the top transplant centers for patient survival, and among the top centers for the number of procedures performed.

"ISMETT is a sign of hope," said Sicily Archbishop, Paolo Romeo. "A vital sign of hope that transmits life, thanks to the vision of a new horizon: a new horizon that opens with an organ donation. From the moment ISMETT was created, the former Cardinal of Palermo, Salvatore Pappalardo, followed the growth of the institute in his role as pastoral father, and I am now following it the same way. I am happy to see the patients, and to see the services that ISMETT has provided to them. To see people who no longer need to leave Sicily for a transplant or specialized therapy. I hope that what has happened with ISMETT can be replicated and multiplied in a land that is losing faith."

ISMETT's one-thousandth transplant was performed on a 40-year-old patient affected with cystic fibrosis, a genetic metabolic disease that destroys the internal organs, particularly the lungs and the liver. In this case, the patient underwent a lung transplant to replace his lungs, which were irremediably damaged by the disease. The transplant was performed in July. After the procedure, the patient had a long recovery at ISMETT, but is now home. His name is Giovanni Pignatelli, and he came to Palermo from Bologna. "I didn't know I was Transplant Number 1,000; I found out just a few days ago," Mr. Pignatelli said. "I came to Palermo because there is a center of excellence in the field of lung transplantation here, and I am happy with my choice. People often talk about the South only in terms of medical malpractice, but there are also positive things, which are never mentioned." Mr. Pignatelli's transplant was performed on July 12. "I was called on July 11th, the night of the World Cup Final," Mr. Pignatelli said. "I rushed to the airport and headed towards Palermo. The surgery lasted 12 hours, and I am now doing well."

Since its inception, ISMETT has achieved a number of important goals: the first lung transplant in the world on a HIV-positive patient; a pediatric liver transplant program considered among the best in Europe; Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation, which certifies the quality practiced by the institution; the opening of the Renato Fiandaca Simulation Center, a new educational model for health care workers, based on the concept of simulation; and the creation of the Regenerative Medicine Unit, aimed at implementing research programs at ISMETT.

ISMETT's future plans include a ventricular assist device (“artificial heart”) project, and the strengthening of its mini-invasive surgery program applied to transplants.