

## TEN YEARS OF TRANSPLANTATION OF THE LIVER IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS: ETHICAL PROBLEMS, OUTCOMES AND PERSPECTIVES (INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, APRIL 6, 2018, MINSK)

The International Scientific and Practical Conference devoted to the 10th anniversary of the first transplantation of the liver in our country was organized and held by the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Belarus and the Committee on Bioethics at the Council of Europe supported by the Information Centre of the Council of Europe in Minsk.

The representatives of the WHO, the Council of Europe, the European Court on Human Rights, the European Committee on Organ Transplantation, The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Central Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption of the Ministry of International Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, scientists and specialists in the field of transplantation from the national centers of Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia, Portugal, clinicians from all regions of the Republic of Belarus took part in the conference.

At the opening of the conference welcome speech on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Belarus was given by Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus Vasily Ivanovich Zharko, under whose guidance and patronage the first successful transplantation of the liver was carried out in our country 10 years ago. In his speech V.I. Zharko outlined the timeliness of making important decisions by the Ministry of Healthcare on the

development of new hi-tech medicine that enabled the Republic of Belarus within 10 years to reach the 24th position in Top 50 countries with the high level of transplantation of the liver in the world. V.I. Zharko assured that the government will always support the actively developing direction in the country on organ transplantation.

The Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Belarus Valery Anatolyevich Malashko highly appreciated achievements of Belarusian transplantologists, having noted a high level of the specialized medical care provided to patients not only from the Republic of Belarus but also other countries of the world, by the specialists of the Republican Research and Practice Centre for Organ and Tissue Transplantation headed by the leading specialist of the country in the field of liver transplantation Oleg Olegovich Rummo and his colleagues.

Representatives of the Council of Europe Verena Taylor and Mikhail Lobov highly appreciated achievements of the Republic of Belarus in the field of liver transplantation, compliance with high requirements of all international resolutions, programs, conventions in the field of human rights and bioethics concerning organ and tissue transplantation. Speakers outlined the relevance of the meeting of specialists in the field of



Photo 1. – Presidium of the conference: Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus V. I. Zharko; Head of the Republican Research and Practice Centre for Organ and Tissue Transplantation, Corresponding member of NASB, Professor O. O. Rummo; Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Belarus V. A. Malashko

transplantology in our country, having noted that cross-disciplinary dialogue enables to avoid misuses in the field of promptly developing high-tech medicine.

The main scientific themes of the international conference were the two aspects, which were devoted to the results, sharing experience and perspectives for the development of practical transplantology, as well as to compliance with the WHO requirements and biomedical ethics on transplantation of human organs, tissues and cells.

The head of the Republican Research and Practice Centre for Organ and Tissue Transplantation, the Laureate of the State Prize of the Republic of Belarus in Science and Technology, Corresponding member of NASB, professor O.O. Rummo noted that over 10 years 540 operations on liver transplantation have been performed in the country, and specialists of the center have gained experience of applying all techniques of transplantation of this important organ that exist in the world. According to Oleg Olegovich, Belarusian specialists are capable to perform any type of operation on liver transplantation existing in the world.



Photo 2. – Head of the Republican Research and Practice Centre for Organ and Tissue Transplantation, Corresponding member of NASB, Professor O. O. Rummo

Among pathologies which demanded liver transplantation chronic virus-related damages to the liver ranks first, the survival rate of patients was 5 years in 82%. More than 100 operations were performed in liver tumors, the main reason for which was hepatocellular cancer, the survival rate of patients after the operation was 5 years in 66%. Excellent result with survival rate of 100% was recorded after liver transplantation due to the development of Budd-Chiari syndrome. The most difficult state (diagnosis), in which liver transplantation was performed, was acute fulminant failure, the reason for the latter was Amanita phalloides poisoning.

Oleg Rummo emphasized that our country is proud of its liver transplantation to children. Over the past 10 years 60 young patients have received liver transplants. The main indication for such operations in children is congenital bile duct atresia. The survival rate in children over 2 years following the transplantation averages 95%.

A very important medical and ethical issue is the fact that preference in liver transplantation is given to patients with more pronounced liver damage, despite a high probability of poor prognosis as compared to those with less severe pathology.

Oleg Rummo noted that the Republic of Belarus is one of the leading countries in the world in organ donations, with 52 transplants per million people.

The participants of the conference greeted warmly a great friend of Belarusian transplantologists, Director of Federal Government Budgetary Institution “Academician V.I. Shumakov Federal Research Center of Transplantation and Artificial Organs” academician Gotie Sergey Vladimirovich who outlined great achievements



Photo 3. – Director of Federal Government Budgetary Institution “Academician V. I. Shumakov Federal Research Center of Transplantation and Artificial Organs” Academician of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences S. V. Gotie

of his Belarusian colleagues in the development and implementation of high-tech methods in medicine. The speaker stressed that despite the availability of 52 transplantation centers in Russia the number of performed organ transplants does not correspond to demand. Academician Gotie noted that unfortunately 59 Regions of the Russian Federation do not participate in donation. The number of cadaveric donations in Russia averages 3.8 per million, as compared to Moscow where cadaveric organ donation rate is 15.7 per million. The speaker presented some interesting facts on liver transplantation: in 2017 a total of 438 operations were performed, of these 106 – to children (in the USA – 531 paediatric transplants).

Ms Laurence Lwoff, Head of the Bioethics Unit of the Council of Europe, Secretary of the Committee on

Bioethics of the Council of Europe, a representative of the intergovernmental organization set up in 1949 which ensures protection of human rights and dignity of the human being in the biomedical field presented the paper "Bioethics and organ donation. Council of Europe perspective". The Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) encompasses 47 states. The speaker reminded the conference participants that the general mechanism of human rights protection is presented in the Oviedo Convention "Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine" (ETS № 164). Particular attention was paid to the compliance with the requirements of the Convention. Ms Laurence Lwoff referred to the main priorities of the Oviedo Convention: protection of living donors and prohibition of financial gain with respect to donation.

The report "WHO guiding principles on human cell, tissue and organ transplantation" made by Mr. Jose Núñez, WHO Advisor on Medical Products of Human Origin, was listened to with great attention.

The speaker noted that transplantation provides quality of life. Only in the USA 122,000 people are on the transplant waiting list, and 20 people die each day while waiting for a transplant. Over 2 million people worldwide currently receive treatment with dialysis, and one million die having no access

to dialysis. The number of patients with diabetes mellitus is expected to increase to 370 million people by 2030.

The major problems of transplantology, outlined Mr. Jose Núñez, are the following: non-human organ donation; definition of brain death; organ donation after circulatory death; decreasing the number of relatives saying no to organ donation (up to 50 million people die each year, 10% of them die in hospitals and 10% of these in the intensive care units, who could be a large reserve as one million transplants are necessary to meet the demand); living donors and "donor tourism", associated with illegal organ procurement (average price – 2,000 US dollars per one kidney). The speaker demonstrated a video film showing unsanitary conditions under which organ donations and transplantations are performed as well as the arrest of "black" transplantologists.

The program of the Scientific Conference was very informative with well-experienced speakers – scientists, transplantologists, lawyers, experts in bioethics, public health administrators, representatives from different countries – urging to reach new frontiers and achieve success in developing high-tech medical care, in compliance with the basic physician's principle "First, do no harm".

*V. Tsyrkunov, conference participant*