

For a liver, patients pay an arm and a leg

BOTTOMLINE: WHAT THE VITAL ORGAN COSTS

BREAK-UP OF HOSPITAL COSTS



INFRASTRUCTURE
Rs. 20-30 crore



DISPOSABLES
Rs. 5 lakh



DRUGS
Rs. 2 lakh



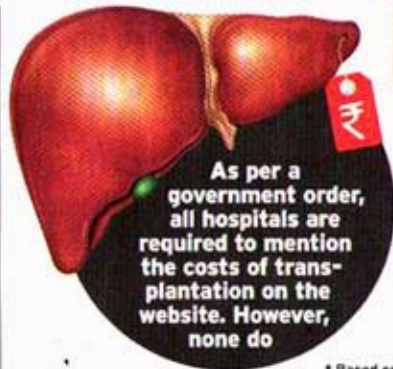
TEAM FEE
Rs. 5-10 lakh



SOLUTION TO PRESERVE LIVER
Rs. 1 lakh



ORGAN RETRIEVAL
Rs. 1 lakh



As per a government order, all hospitals are required to mention the costs of transplantation on the website. However, none do

COSTS AT HOSPITALS ACROSS TN*

CMC Vellore
Rs. 15 - 20 lakh

MIOT Hospital
Rs. 15 lakh

Global Hospital
Rs. 25 lakh

Apollo Hospital
Rs. 20-23 lakh

* Based on individual hospital claims



Liver transplantation is expensive because we need state-of-the-art facilities to ensure zero infection for the patient, as well as drugs and disposables which are imported. But costs can come down if we push indigenous manufacture of drugs and equipment

- DR. PRITHVI MOHANDAS, MIOT HOSPITALS

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: When a 38-year-old man received his liver through a transplant at MIOT Hospitals on Tuesday, it was likely he was creating history of sorts.

From the hospital's point of view, he was their first patient to undergo a liver transplant. But the nub of the matter was this: arguably, he paid the least amount (in a corporate set-up) for his procedure - Rs. 15 lakh.

A theatre-owner from Erode, the patient was referred to MIOT for surgery after fatty liver disease, spurred by diabetes and supplemented by alcohol, led to liver failure. He received a cadaveric liver from a brain-dead donor in Tiruchi last month. Now, his doctors say, he is recovering admirably.

Though he had the resources to fund his operation, he is grateful that he got the price he did, compared to the prevailing rate at corporate hospitals. Another five or 10 lakhs might have been tough, he concedes.

"Infection in the post-operative period is the most important cause of failure of transplants," explains Paari Vijayraghavan, liver transplant surgeon at MIOT. High levels of infection-control are necessary at this period, as are expensive nutrition/drug supplements. A multi-disciplinary team is also vital, apart from state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment, to make transplants successful, he adds.

"Undoubtedly transplants are expensive. And that puts them out of reach for most people in this country," says

George Chandy, director, MIOT Institute of Gastrointestinal and Liver Diseases. Also, most patients are really sick by the time the decision is made to provide a liver (90 per cent liver function is lost) and they have to be maintained carefully.

Prithvi Mohandas, joint managing director, MIOT, says, "We are able to offer a liver transplant at this price, because our doctors don't take a consultation fee - they are paid salaries. This brings down the costs substantially. We are planning to bring down the cost of surgery further by Rs. 5 lakh."

"The best thing, then, is to avoid transplantation. It is with this aim that MIOT is starting its liver and pancreas clinic. Pick up diseases early and prevent organ failure," Dr. Chandy explains.