

THE LANCET

www.thelancet.com


Volume 362, Number 9385 • Founded 1823 • Published weekly • Saturday August 30, 2003

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Talking Point

Living liver donors

'By contrast with western countries, no perioperative mortality was recorded in living liver donors in Japan'

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Since the first successful living donor liver transplantation was done in Japan in 1994, the yearly number of operations has risen, reaching 417 in 2001. Little is known, however, about the morbidity and mortality of such donors. Japanese researchers, Koji Umeshita and colleagues, assessed 1841 living liver donors. No perioperative mortality was recorded, but postoperative complications were identified in just over 10% of donors. Donors of the right liver lobe had more complications and a longer postoperative hospital stay than did donors of the left lobe or lateral segment. The authors state that since some donors developed serious complications, morbidity should be reduced to maintain the zero mortality rate. In a Commentary, Owen Surman and Martin Hertl caution that donor safety should override benefit for the recipient.