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Prospective Psychological Evaluation of Pediatric Heart and Heart–Lung Recipients

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Abstract

Objective To study psychological adjustment in children and adolescents before undergoing heart or heart–lung transplantation and to reevaluate them at 6, 12, and 24 months after surgery. **Methods** Previously validated measures of behavior and depression were administered to children, their parents, and teachers. Parents also completed a measure of distress. **Results** Before transplantation, participants and parents obtained significantly higher scores on measures of behavior and psychological distress than children with no health problems and their parents, but 1 year after transplant, there were no significant differences between the two groups. Over time, there were significant improvements in


depression and behavior scores in the group who had undergone transplantation. **Conclusion** Despite improvements in psychological functioning over time, a significant minority of children and adolescents undergoing transplantation are at risk for psychological adjustment difficulties. Psychological interventions to reduce morbidity need to be implemented and evaluated.

Key words: behavior; heart and/or lung transplantation; psychological distress.

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