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India performs first successful lung transplant on COVID survivor

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Gurugram based Artemis Hospital has recently treated an active professional of Ghaziabad infected with severe COVID-19 at its clinical unit. The patient had undergone an entire plethora of management right from medicinal therapy, high oxygen demand, ventilator requirement, tracheostomy. He was initially admitted to the COVID dedicated ICU where he recovered from the acute illness after aggressive treatment and finally tested negative.

Despite the best efforts over 6 weeks, it was unable to bring him out of ventilation due to severely damaged lungs as part of post-COVID-19 sequelae. Most options for his acceptable recovery were exhausted though Dr Shivanshu Raj Goyal was determined to explore a better solution thus with the consent of the patient’s family, Dr Goyal and his team derived an organized plan to offer a surgical cure in the form of a lungs transplant. Till now this procedure was not performed in India for a post-COVID sequelae case.

The patient was on a ventilator due to high oxygen demand and the possibility of the collapse was extremely high during the transport to the transplant center. Another big challenge was the unavailability of the donor's lungs with a long waiting list.

Specialized technique ECMO was used by the transplant team to oxygenate the patient for 33 days. On 27th August 2020, he had undergone India’s first sequential bilateral lung transplant successfully, opening a ray of hope to many patients whose lungs have undergone irreversible changes secondary to COVID-19. This marks a first of such kind procedure to date reported from any part of Asia.