

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

UMMC PERFORMS FIRST PEDIATRIC HEART TRANSPLANT IN EIGHT YEARS

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JACKSON, Miss. – The state's only dedicated pediatric heart transplant team has performed the first heart transplant in eight years on 13-year-old Malcolm Jones of Winona.

Jones underwent surgery Sunday, September 18 at Batson Children's Hospital. He is listed in fair condition.

"Malcolm is doing very well," said Dr. Avi Aggarwal, assistant professor of pediatrics and medical director of the pediatric heart transplant program. "He has an excellent prognosis."

The pediatric heart transplant program had become inactive due to a gradual loss of the highly-specialized team members needed to perform these complex surgeries. The last pediatric heart transplant was performed in 2003 by Dr. Giorgio Aru, professor of surgery at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

The reactivation of the program has been led by the congenital heart surgery team, which was re-established with the recruitment of Dr. Jorge Salazar, associate professor of surgery and chief of the congenital heart program, in April 2010. Prior to that, patients needing heart surgery were transferred out of the state. Since his arrival, more than 400 pediatric heart surgeries have been performed at the Medical Center and no patients have been sent out of the state.

"When we started the congenital heart surgery program, we knew we would eventually have a pediatric heart transplant program, but we wanted to establish the pediatric heart program first with excellent results and a great infrastructure," Salazar said. "We have that and with the help of the state of Mississippi, the Medical Center and our adult heart transplant program, we were able to get the transplant program going again very quickly,"

Jones was seriously ill when he arrived at Batson Children's Hospital last month. He was born with tetralogy of fallot, a condition that includes four congenital defects of the heart and major blood vessels. He has had three surgeries to correct the defects, but his left ventricle was failing for unknown reasons, necessitating his placement on the transplant waiting list.

"His transplant was his last chance to grow and develop and have a normal life," said Dr. Daniel Dibardino, assistant professor of surgery, who joined the congenital heart surgery team in July.

"I'm so thankful to God and the doctors and nurses," said Gina Jones, mother of the patient. "I just want to see him running around and playing."

Aggarwal said having a formal pediatric heart transplant program fills an important need in the state.

"We are very excited about our first congenital heart transplant," Aggarwal said. "Having a program in place, we can better serve children who are waiting and hoping for a new heart."

CUTLINE: Members of the University of Mississippi Medical Center's Pediatric Heart Transplant Program react to 13-year-old Malcolm Jones of Winona as he talks about going home to play. Jones is the first pediatric heart transplant patient for the reactivated program at UMMC. Attending the news conference to announce the surgery are, from left, Jones, his mother Gina Jones, Dr. Avi Aggarwal, assistant professor of pediatrics and medical director of the pediatric heart transplant program, Dr. Daniel DiBardino,

assistant professor of surgery, Dr. Jorge Salazar, associate professor of surgery and chief of the congenital heart program, and Dr. Michelle Sheth, assistant professor of anesthesiology.

9/22/11

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