



The advent of liver transplantation has revolutionised the outlook for many babies and young people with a liver disease. In 2001 the King's College Hospital team celebrated its 500th paediatric liver transplant with the programme starting in 1989. As a result of the great generosity of the donors, in excess of 3,199,370 days of life have been provided. From the early days of a one-for-one 'swap' of an organ, new innovative techniques have been developed as a result of donor shortages and the need to treat different types of liver disease.

They can be reduced in size to 'fit' liver smaller recipient. Thus tiny patients as young as five days old can now be given a new liver. Splitting a donor liver between two patients is now possible. Professor Miotto-Wergoni reported that the King's team had undertaken 107 split liver transplants by 2001 with a one-year survival rate of 89% and a five year survival rate of 83%. The team has performed 35 living related liver transplants - when a parent gives part of their liver to their child with one and five year survival rates of 94%. Auxiliary transplant has been used in three metabolic liver diseases where there is a lack of production of an essential enzyme by an otherwise normal liver and in acute liver failure. For acute liver disease there is still the pursuit of the 'Holy Grail' - liver plays.

Turning to the current and future areas of research - there is still so much more that needs to be done. Areas of research include:

- Understanding the mechanisms of rejection and tolerance.
- Finding better anti rejection drugs.
- Preventing the complications of liver disease.
- Hepatocyte transplantation.
- Preserving liver disease.
- Gene therapy.

## USA Trip

Catherine Arkley attended a special conference devoted to biliary atresia in Atlanta, Georgia in early December 2002. The meeting aims to look at the current areas of research and help define new avenues of enquiry. It was also a major opportunity for all researchers and clinicians involved in treating patients with biliary atresia to meet and share ideas.

# Liver Direct - 0121 333 8989

Birmingham Children's Hospital's response to the management of long term care of their patients

Since 1989 the Birmingham Children's Hospital has provided specialist care for children with acute and chronic liver disease. The unit has over 300 children and young people who have received liver transplants, over 100 children and young people with autoimmune liver disease, 10 children who are recipients of intestinal transplant and over 2,000 children being followed up. These figures are increasing yearly.

All these patients have benefited from advances in treatment of liver disease, transplantation and especially in immune suppression. This has led to a steep increase in phone calls from patients, parents, primary healthcare and shared care teams. The Liver Unit team recognised there was a need to provide a quality, efficient and effective service to help these people and groups and developed the concept of Liver Direct.

Liver Direct is a nurse led telephone consult on service with email access piloted in 2001. Liaison Charge Nurse Graham Gordon has led the implementation of the project which involved:

- Developing the computer facilities and links.
- Developing the sources of information used by the team.

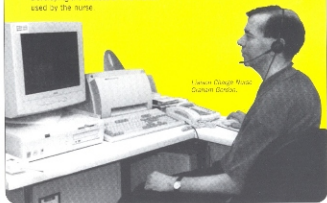
Training in the various systems for a range of people including the liver team and the hospital community, including the switchboard.

The first year's experience has now been recorded and in that time the service received calls from 1,300 families and from primary health care teams.

Feedback from the families to CLDF and a small survey of users at the hospital has indicated that the service is popular. Early indications are that the Liver Unit team can work more effectively and efficiently.

If you are a patient or the parent of a patient being treated at the Liver Unit at the Birmingham Children's Hospital, then you can use Liver Direct.

Funding has been secured to develop the service in 2003 and it is envisaged that the service will be re-launched in the Spring to offer morning and afternoon sessions Monday to Friday with a late afternoon session aimed at adolescent use. Presently the service is Monday to Friday 10.30 am to 12 noon on 0121 333 8989 with an email of [liver.direct@bch.bhamchilidres.wir.nhs.uk](mailto:liver.direct@bch.bhamchilidres.wir.nhs.uk)



Liaison Charge Nurse  
Graham Gordon