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## Eight-year-old becomes province's youngest lung-transplant recipient

EDMONTON – An Edmonton boy has a brighter future after becoming the province's youngest double-lung transplant recipient.

Eight-year-old Tahir Asif received new lungs during surgery on April 21 at the Stollery Children's Hospital, one of few major Canadian facilities that perform pediatric lung transplants.

Parents Asif and Nabila Jutt are grateful that their son, who was born with cystic fibrosis, will have an improved chance for a normal childhood.

"The people at the Stollery who cared for Tahir were so good," says Asif. "You just can't get better than that type of care. They were there for us every step of the way, medically and emotionally. We will never forget them."

The procedure was only the fifth pediatric lung transplant under 17 years performed in Alberta. Tahir will remain under the care of the pediatric lung transplant program at the Stollery throughout his childhood. His progress will be monitored in outpatient and medical treatment adjusted to keep him healthy. He's already looking forward to the fall when he's expected to attend public school for the first time in almost two years.

Tahir was born with cystic fibrosis, a life-shortening genetic disease that causes mucus to build up and clog some of the organs in the body, particularly the lungs — making breathing very difficult. He battled with severe chest infections and required regular intravenous antibiotics since he was four. His health deteriorated critically in the past year. He was referred for lung transplantation six months ago and required numerous medical treatments while waiting for transplant. By March, he needed full-time use of a ventilator to breathe. Without a lung transplant, he wasn't expected to live beyond summer.

"Our family is so thankful to the donor family," Asif says. "There are no words that can thank them enough."

Dr. John Mullen, surgical director of thoracic transplantation at the University of Alberta Hospital, performed the transplant with a nine-member surgical team that included nurses, surgeons, pediatric anesthesiologists, perfusionists, and operating room assistants in one of the newly built Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute operating theatres.

Tahir's double lung transplant was a seven-hour operation. "The operation is very similar to an adult lung transplant, only the connections we have to make are a lot smaller, which increases the complexity. We were extremely blessed to receive these lungs for Tahir at this critical point in time for him."

The double-lung transplant does not completely cure Tahir's cystic fibrosis but Dr. Mullen says it will allow him to be like a normal young boy again.

"Tahir has certainly received a new lease on life," says Dr. Mullen.

“He has some work ahead of him as far as rehabilitation but someone as strong as Tahir is sure to get through this with incredibly positive results.”

The Jutt family – which also includes Tahir’s 10-year-old brother Tayyeb, and six-year-old sister Afra – moved from Yellowknife, NT, to Edmonton last summer to be closer to Stollery.

The first pediatric lung transplant at Stollery was performed in 2002.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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