

Australian and New Zealand Paired Kidney Exchange Program

Protocol 14: Bridge Donor Information



Bridge Donor Information

What is a bridge donor?

A bridge donor is a person who donates their kidney one or more days after the person who they entered the ANZKX program with has received a kidney.

A bridge donor can donate to either a recipient registered in the ANZKX program or to a patient from the transplant wait list.

How should bridge donors be assessed?

It is the responsibility of the transplanting unit to assess the donor regarding their suitability for bridging. Transplant unit education programs should include bridge donation when ANZKX program is being discussed. Medical and psychosocial assessments for pairs being entered into ANZKX should consider whether the donor might be appropriate to be a bridge donor if that becomes relevant in the future. This includes considering the risk of a bridge donor not proceeding. Ideally this should be by a social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist that has some experience in transplant donor assessments.

It is also essential that all of the donor medical assessment is completed prior to acceptance of a transplant offer.

When are bridge donors used?

ANZKX will only consider the use of a bridge donor when that donor is in a chain started by a non-directed altruistic donor (NDAD). Transplants in a NDAD chain must be done in order, to prevent an orphan recipient if a donor's surgery does not go ahead.

Bridge donors in an NDAD chain may be used in the following circumstances:

- When booking the donor and recipient operation on the same day is not feasible at the transplant centre due to access to surgical lists.
- When the donor's domestic circumstances make surgery on the same day as the recipient they entered the program with challenging. This should be explored by the transplant unit to ensure that these circumstances are not insurmountable.

Under these circumstances, following an ANZKX offer, a transplant unit should again assess the donor's suitability for being a bridge donor and discuss this option with the donor to determine whether they are happy to proceed.

Duration of Bridging

To reduce the risk of a bridge donor withdrawing from the program, ANZKX aims to minimise the time a donor should wait for surgery. The ANZKX team and the transplant unit should aim to limit the period of bridging to up to 7 days when possible. Exceptions to this timeframe will be discussed with units on a case-by-case basis if there is a clear reason for this. Longer periods of bridging can also be accepted when this is the donors request.

What the benefits of bridge donation?

In certain circumstances, a donor may wish to bridge due to certain life events or if domestically it is challenging for the donor and recipient to have an operation on the same day, for example families with



young children where parents are donor and recipient. Bridge donation may therefore be of benefit to the donor and allow them some flexibility and control over the timing of donation.

There are other potential benefits of bridge donors regarding scheduling of surgical dates. Without bridge donors, all units involved in a chain must agree to a single surgical date. This can make it difficult to identify a date within a reasonable timeframe and can lead to either limiting the size of chains or scheduling surgical dates for a long time after matching has occurred. Long intervals between matching and surgery can in turn increase the risk of chain breakdown. Units can choose for a donor to be a bridge donor if they are unable to schedule both the donor surgery and recipient surgery on the same day.

What are a transplant unit's responsibility when a donor is bridging?

Bridge donors should be supported during this period as, for some people, it might be a period of increased anxiety and stress. Donors should also not feel pressured or coerced into becoming a bridge donor. This process is completely voluntary and will not effect their recipients success in the ANZKX program.

What are the risks of bridge donation?

The risk of bridge donation is withdrawal of a bridge donor from the program after their registered recipient has received a transplant with the disruption of the people matched after them in the chain. In the literature the risk of bridge donor withdrawal is approximately between 3-5% of all bridge donors. This is a risk in chains with bridge donors however overall chain breakdown in ANZKX is more commonly due to other issues, such as other recipients becoming unwell.



VERSION CONTROL			
Version	Date	Author	Comments
V 1.0	May 2023	ANZKX Team	New protocol created for Bridge Donor information.

