

Rabin Medical Center team performs country's first small intestine transplant

• By JUDY SIEGEL

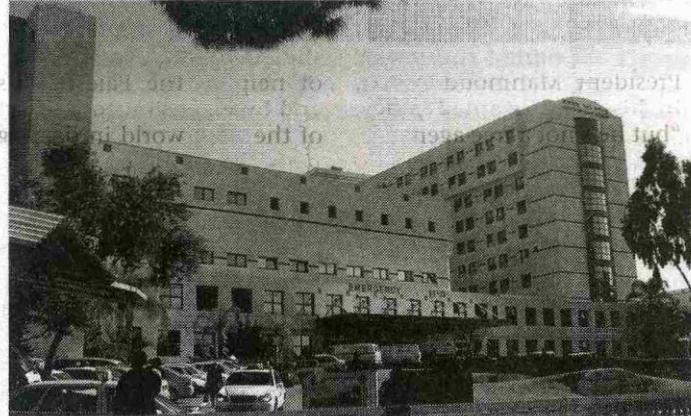
Surgeons at the Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Campus in Petah Tikva have performed the first-ever successful transplant in Israel of a small intestine.

The surgery was performed on Thursday but announced on Saturday night when it was determined that the patient, a 39-year-old woman whose own intestine had been removed two years ago, was doing well.

Since the removal of her intestine, the woman had been fed by total parenteral nutrition (TPN) through a vein instead of by eating. She had been in very serious condition, however, just before her transplant.

The pioneering operation, which is performed in only a few medical centers in the world, required major preparations including transplant surgeons, gastroenterologists, anesthesiologist, nurses, intensive care experts, the blood bank and nutrition experts. Only about 80 such transplants are performed in the world in an average year.

The married woman and mother has suffered from a condition in which benign polyps and cancerous lesions develop in her digestive system. She had



STAFF AT Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Campus in Petah Tikva (pictured) performed the groundbreaking operation on a 39-year-old wife and mother. (Wikimedia Commons)

to be hospitalized many times.

The surgical team included Prof. Eitan Mor, head of the transplant department, and Dr. Evyatar Nesher, who studied the technique during two years at Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital.

Small intestines are very difficult to transplant. Since the surgery, the team have been on the lookout to make sure the new organ has not been rejected and has the ability to digest solid food. Survival rates of intestinal transplants are relatively low, at 85 percent during the first year and 60 percent during the first

five years. As a result, transplants are offered patients who have no other medical alternative. Potential patients suffer from Crohn's disease, congenital defects, physical trauma such as from surgery and benign growths.

Dr. Tamar Ashkenazi, head of the National Transplant Center, said that the center's steering committee approved small intestine transplants a year ago and training of teams began. "We congratulate the teams on their success and cooperation on the first such transplant," she said.