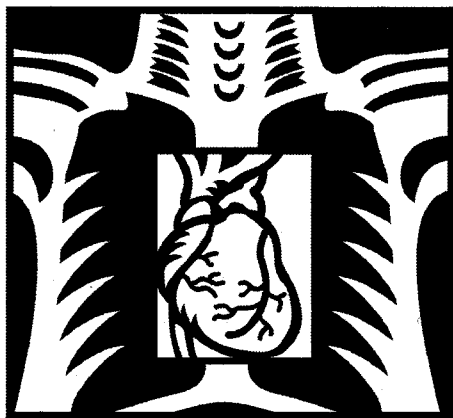


Mid America Heart Institute Performs Uncommon Double Transplant

Gene Kern received heart and kidney transplant

While trick-or-treating with his three children in 1982, Gene Kern had his first heart attack at age 37. Physicians at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute performed a double-bypass on Kern. But the heart disease that ran in his family was strong and 10 years later he had his second heart attack and a second double-bypass.



Things were going well for Kern until 2004 when he began experiencing kidney failure. By staying off salt and taking other precautionary measures, Kern was able to get by until October 2005 when he had his third heart attack, just two weeks before he was scheduled for placement of an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD).

Doctors placed a stent in Kern's heart, and soon after implanted the ICD. Despite those measures, Kern's health was deteriorating quickly. Five months later, physicians evaluated him for a heart transplant and discovered that Kern's only option was to have a double transplant—a kidney and heart transplant at the same time. After less than two months on the donor list, a perfect match was found and Kern underwent Saint Luke's fourth-ever double transplant

and 314th heart transplant. According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, only 414 heart/kidney transplants have been performed in the United States since 1988.

"We're lucky to live in the Kansas City area, which has one of the shortest wait times for transplants nationwide, and also the expert care of the Mid America Heart Institute,"

said Linda Kern, Gene's wife. "Someone pointed us in the right direction, and we feel very fortunate."

Immediately after the transplant Kern and his family noticed a change. He began breathing well, his color came back, and even his fingernails were pink. "Before the transplant I would get worn out taking a shower," Kern said. "Now I feel so much healthier." His wife adds, "It's really changed our lives!"

Today, four weeks after Kern's transplant, he is well on his way to a full recovery. Kern is looking forward to "feeling normal again," which he hasn't felt for about two years. "I'm anxious to start tinkering around in my shop again, working on my old tractor, and mowing the lawn," Kern said. ■