

NSW

First robotic kidney transplant surgery successful at Westmead hospital

Some couples exchange jewellery or gadgets as gifts during the festive season but this Christmas Talitha Sawley gave her husband the ultimate present in a first-of-its-kind robotic surgery at Westmead Hospital.

Kaitlyn Hudson-O'Farrell, The Daily Telegraph  Subscriber only | December 24, 2019 5:30am


Some couples exchange jewellery or gadgets as gifts during the festive season but this Christmas Talitha Sawley gave her husband Timothy a kidney.

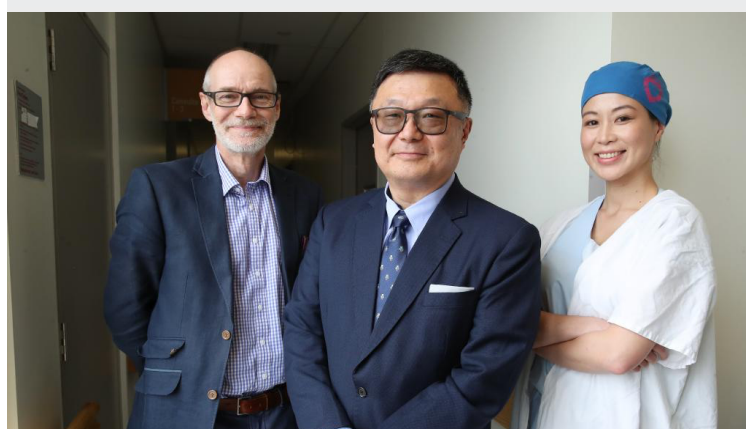
The procedure to save Mr Sawley, 38, from end-stage renal failure was the first of its kind transplant procedure performed in Australia.


Westmead Hospital's \$4 million Da Vinci surgery robot safely transplanted a kidney from wife to husband.

"It was always planned that (Talitha) would donate when we worked out we were compatible," said Mr Sawley.



 Talitha Sawley with her husband Timothy and their children Josh, 7, and Jake, 5. Picture: David Swift.



 The transplant team: Professor Henry Pleass, Professor Howard Lau and Urologist

The father-of-two was shocked to be diagnosed with kidney failure four years ago and deteriorated to the point of needing surgery in 2018.

“Two months before I was scheduled, my nephrologist suggested us for the robotic surgery. I was a bit nervous, but waking up to know now that I’ve got a good 20 years ahead of me, it’s great,” he said.

Urologist and Professor of Surgery Howard Lau helmed the Christmas miracle last Wednesday, controlling the Da Vinci’s robotic arms to perform the ‘more controlled and precise’ surgery that uses smaller incisions than standard procedure.

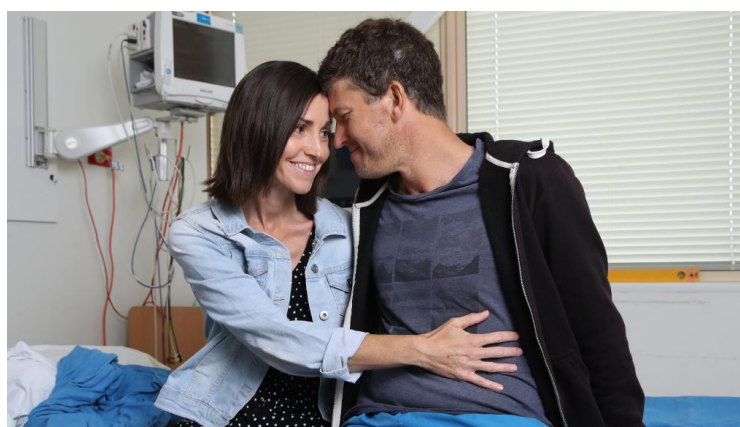
“With advanced technology, we’re able to offer minimally invasive surgery, which gives the advantage of reduced pain and faster recovery. Previously, we were not able to do so using invasive keyhole surgery,” Prof Lau said.

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Mr Sawley was an ‘ideal’ candidate to test the groundbreaking procedure on.

“Initially this type of surgery was for the heart or prostate procedures, but we’re increasingly finding new applications for it. We can do more and more with the robot, including operations like base of mouth surgery, which previously has been quite gruesome,” Prof Lau said.

The transplant recovery results are “the best (the medical team) have seen yet,” making for a very merry Christmas for the Merriwa-based Sawleys and their two young sons.



📷 The surgery is minimally invasive, giving the advantage of a faster recovery. Picture: David Swift.

“I’m not too fussed about presents this year, I’ve got one right here,” Mrs Sawley said, with a hug for her husband.

Surgeon and Professor Henry Pleass praised the couple for agreeing to undertake the radical surgery.

“(The Sawleys) are very selfless people, there’s risks involved even for the donor and we could easily have performed Tim’s operation as a standard keyhole surgery,” he said.

“But they weren’t doing this to help themselves, but more so for the next generation so (Professor Lau) can hone his skills with the Da Vinci and continue helping people.”

Ms Sawley, 38, said the surgeons did a “fantastic job”.

About 70 Da Vinci machines operate in public and private hospitals having first

been introduced in 2000.

