



Pitfalls of pediatric heart transplants

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A recent PBS documentary portrayed the first scenario shown below of a heart transplant on an infant, while I recommend the second scenario.

First scenario—intervention:

- (I) Thousands of dollars spent obtaining and transporting the donor heart;
- (II) Hundreds of thousands of dollars spent performing the surgery;
- (III) Millions of dollars spent keeping the child alive for the rest of his tormented life treating infections, malignancies, etc.;
- (IV) No more kids—the parents will be too busy keeping this one alive. No grandkids;
- (V) Immense grief for the parents and the kid, year after year—no way to measure that cost.

Second scenario—natural course:

- (I) The infant dies and the couple mourns;
- (II) The couple has more kids: overwhelming odds they

will be healthy;

- (III) The kids grow up to live productive lives. Lots of grandkids, maybe great grandkids;
- (IV) The country saves millions of dollars. All the kids and grandkids pay taxes.
- (V) Most important of all, the family avoids countless days of misery, pain, and grief.

Have those surgeons ever seen *Bridge on the River Kwai*? Who the hell's side are they on?

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Footnote

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