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## Cheney Among Oldest To Get Heart Transplant

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Former Vice President Dick Cheney stands out at the suburban Virginia hospital where he got a heart transplant over the weekend. Not only is he older than most other patients undergoing the procedure, he waited longer too.

After being on a waiting list for almost two years, according to his office, the 71-year-old Mr. Cheney on Saturday underwent heart-transplant surgery and was recovering Sunday in the intensive-care unit of Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, Va.

Mr. Cheney could stay in the hospital for about another week, barring any complications, as doctors work to get the donor heart acclimated to his body, medical experts said. After that, patients tend to continue their recovery at home, usually taking treatments to prevent rejection.

"The critical adjustment period is the first three months," said Robert Michler, surgeon-in-chief at Montefiore Einstein Center in New York, who isn't connected to Mr. Cheney's case.

Mr. Cheney's 20-month wait for his new heart was more than twice as long as the nine-month median waiting period at Inova Fairfax Hospital. "That's pretty robust evidence he was treated as a usual citizen," said Mary Norine Walsh, medical director of the transplant program at St. Vincent Heart Center of Indiana

in Indianapolis, who also doesn't have personal knowledge of Mr. Cheney's case.

Mr. Cheney is older than most heart recipients. At Inova, only two out of 19 heart recipients last year were over 64. The previous year, the hospital had only one recipient in that age range, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, an independent agency that manages the U.S. organ transplant system for the federal government and collects national transplant data. UNOS spokesman Joel Newman said the age of recipients is increasing due to advances in cardiovascular technology.

Since suffering his first of five heart attacks at age 37, Mr. Cheney has become a case study of how innovation in technology has extended lives.

With his heart transplant, Mr. Cheney has now been treated with nearly all of the modern interventions developed for people with advanced cardiovascular disease: bypass surgery, artery-opening devices called stents, implantable defibrillators to prevent sudden cardiac arrest, and a left ventricular assist device, or LVAD, to support the pumping capacity of a heart in end-stage heart failure. For heart-transplant recipients age 65 and older, the one-year survival rate is lower than for younger patients but still high, at about 84%, based on UNOS data.

—Siobhan Gorman  
contributed to this article.