

Twin-Twin Transfusion Syndrome

By Denise Dador

July 13, 2006 - Six-day-old brothers Diego and Daniel Erazo shared much more than other identical twins. For their first five months in the womb Daniel was receiving an unhealthy amount of Diego's blood and amniotic fluid. It's a life-threatening, condition called twin-twin transfusion syndrome.

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"My first doctor told me he could do nothing about it, so he told me there was no hope for my babies," Lizbeth Erazo, the mother of the twins, said.

"If you do nothing there is about a 95 percent chance the pregnancy will be lost," Dr. Ramen Chmait said.

Chmait, the director of fetal therapy at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles-USC's Institute for Maternal Fetal Health says besides terminating the pregnancy, doctors can try to drain the fluid from the recipient twin, but it doesn't resolve the underlying problem.

In this case, Diego was giving his brother so much fluid, Daniel developed heart failure.

"That baby without surgery probably would have died in a couple of days," Chmait said.

Chmait is one of a few surgeons west of the Mississippi trained to perform this state of the art in utero laser surgery. Through a three millimeter incision, he inserts a scope into the uterus and severs all vascular ties between the twins.

"With the surgery we quote an 85 percent chance that one will survive and a 50 percent chance that both will survive," Chmait said.

Diego and Daniel were born a month early, but doctors say they're healthy and both are doing quite well. It's everything Lisbeth had prayed for.

"And this is a big miracle for me because if Dr. Chmait was not here, my babies would not survive," Erazo said.