

Argentine singer recovering after heart, lung transplant

Buenos Aires, Nov 22 (EFE) Argentine singer-songwriter and actor Sandro is 'stable' and recovering 'favourably' from the complex surgery of a heart and lung transplant, doctors have said.

'Like any other human being he deserves the chance to live that we have given him. He came here with serious multi-organ deterioration, which made him a very high-risk patient. But up to now we're winning the battle,' Claudio Burgos, head of the team of surgeons that performed the transplant, told a press conference Saturday.

Roberto Sanchez, popularly known as Sandro, underwent Friday a transplant operation that lasted five hours in the Italiano Hospital in the Argentine city of Mendoza, some 1,000 km west of Buenos Aires.

According to the doctors, the artist is breathing with the aid of a mechanical ventilator, and has no fever.

'The transplant was carried out with complete success and he is showing the progress expected under the circumstances. He had previous surgeries and in such circumstances it's usual that the patient's progress is a little more complex than if he had not had previous surgeries,' said Sandro's pulmonologist, Juan Antonio Mazei.

The singer's cardiologist, Serio Perrone, confirmed that the 'progress' of the patient 'from last night until now has been favourable'.

The 'Gypsy', 64, had priority on the waiting list of organ donations due to his debilitated state of health and diminished lung capacity.

The singer-songwriter, who won popularity in several Latin American countries with his romantic songs, suffered a chronic respiratory ailment because of his addiction to tobacco, for which he spent six months in a Buenos Aires hospital, from where he was moved Friday morning to Mendoza to be operated.

Burgos said that the cardiopulmonary implant in the artist was from an 'optimum donor', a youth of 22 years, with organs in 'good condition', which has allowed Sandro 'to make favourable progress up to now'.

The surgeon said that the artist 'was very excited about the transplant because he felt he was nearing the end of his life'.

'He had a great desire to live and that's why he took on this great battle, as he himself said,' Burgos added.

The author of such numbers as 'Mi Amigo El Puma' (My Friend Puma) and 'Rosa, Rosa' also gave concerts with the aid of artificial respiration, until his illness no longer permitted him to go on stage.

Sandro has racked up some 50 hit discs across Latin America and has been in a dozen movies.

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