

CONNECT TO PURPOSE

Successful Double Lung Transplant

Oklahoma Heart Institute

For Skylar Green, 36, a patrol lieutenant for the Muskogee County Sheriff's Office, the first few days of COVID-19 felt like the flu. However, body aches and a fever turned into congestion in his lungs, making it difficult to breathe.

Diagnosed with COVID pneumonia, Skylar was admitted to a nearby hospital, where he stayed 10 days. Though on oxygen and a ventilator, his condition worsened. Skylar was transferred to Oklahoma Heart Institute (OHI) under the care of Adam C. Betz, MD and Daniel Hopkins, MD. He was intubated and placed on an ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) device, which allowed oxygen-rich blood to circulate medications to help reduce the congestion in his lungs.

"Skylar's COVID pneumonia was as severe as one could possibly get," says Dr. Betz, medical director of pulmonary ECMO at Oklahoma Heart Institute. "COVID had damaged his lungs so severely that there was not enough recoverable lung left to ever come off the ECMO machine without a transplant."

Skylar stayed on ECMO in a medically induced coma for many weeks while his doctors contacted medical centers for a lung transplant. They also worked to wean him off the sedation and bring him out of the coma. Still connected to ECMO, he was transported to the Baylor Medicine Lung Institute at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center in Houston, Texas, for the transplant.

The double lung transplant was a success. "I feel a lot better today than I did yesterday," Skylar says. "That's kind of a trend that I hope continues."

In addition to the many medications Skylar takes to guard against infections and rejection of his new lungs, he is now fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Skylar and his wife, Aerial, are thankful for his caregivers along this journey – including the care team at OHI.

"It was the time that they were willing to spend with us and the one-on-one care that I valued the most," says Skylar. "The nurses were on top of their jobs too. I really felt their emotional connection to my needs. I couldn't have asked for better care. They literally kept me alive."

OUR PURPOSE is caring for people:
our patients, their families and one another.