



International Traveling Patient Services





About UPMC ISMETT

The *Istituto Mediterraneo per i Trapianti e Terapie ad Alta Specializzazione* (ISMETT) is a hospital dedicated to organ transplantation and highly specialized therapies for critical diagnoses regarding abdominal and thoracic organs, including complex liver, pancreas, kidney, heart, and lung surgeries. UPMC ISMETT is an international partnership between the Region of Sicily and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). The clinical and administrative activities of ISMETT are managed by the American partner, which is a global leader in the fields of transplantation, research, and other critical care specialties.

UPMC ISMETT was the first hospital in southern Italy to receive Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation, one of the most advanced quality accreditation systems for health care facilities. This accreditation confirms the excellence of UPMC ISMETT in the care and safety of patients, and its dedication to improving clinical performance, management, and training programs, which involve approximately one thousand nurses, physicians, technicians, and administrative staff every year.

In September 2014, recognizing high quality in the treatment of end-stage organ failure, Italy's Ministry of Health awarded UPMC ISMETT with the title of IRCCS (an Italian acronym that stands for Scientific Institute for Medical Treatment, Hospitalization, and Research).

Care for International Traveling Patients

International Traveling Patient Services at UPMC ISMETT provides the highest level of personalized support to international patients traveling to Palermo, Italy. Whether seeking an initial diagnosis, a second medical opinion, treatment for a diagnosed disease, or a post-surgical check-up, our guests experience comprehensive care in a comfortable and welcoming environment.



World-Renowned Clinical Care

Transplant Programs for Adults

Since 1999, UPMC ISMETT has performed more than 3,000 transplants, making it one of the leading organ transplant centers in Europe and a major referral center for Mediterranean countries.

UPMC ISMETT offers all solid organ transplant programs including liver, kidney, pancreas, heart, and lung. For international traveling patients, we offer abdominal transplants only due to restrictions for registration of foreign non-resident people on the deceased donor waiting list.

As a partner of UPMC, one of the leading transplant centers in the U.S. and home to some of the world's foremost transplant experts, UPMC ISMETT provides the highest quality care of the most advanced procedures.

Abdominal Transplants

The Abdominal Surgery and Organ Transplantation Program offers kidney, liver, and pancreas transplants. It also offers combined organ transplantation for the treatment of acute and chronic organ failure. The latest surgical techniques are used including whole organ, split liver, living donor, and double kidney transplants.

Living Organ Donor Transplants

Live organ donation is a life-saving option that offers several advantages. Most importantly, a patient can receive a life-saving transplant before they become critically ill or die waiting from their disease. Additionally, with a growing transplant waiting list, living organ donations help solve the shortage of suitable organs.

UPMC ISMETT routinely performs living donor kidney and liver transplants and uses a minimally invasive approach whenever possible.

In Italy, living organ donation is regulated by laws and protocols, requiring several legal obligations. The patient liaison team at UPMC ISMETT handles all legal and administrative matters as required for the donor and recipient. This helps to reduce the length of stay in Palermo for patients and their families.



A PIONEER IN ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

3,000+ Transplants performed since 1999

Cadaver liver and kidney transplants **1,800+**

270+ Living donor kidney transplants

Living donor liver transplants **190+**

(Figures for 1999 to 2023)

Maria's Story

Living Donor Liver Transplant

"I donated part of my liver to my son and would do it five more times."

Shortly after his birth, Maria's newborn son was diagnosed with liver disease and the only treatment was a transplant. As a doctor, (her husband is one too), Maria knew she wanted to be her son's donor to reduce the wait time for a liver. They traveled from Moscow, Russia, to UPMC ISMETT for the best care.



Scan the QR code to read Maria's full story.

Expert Care for Children

Pediatric Solid Organ Transplants

The Pediatric Transplant Program at UPMC ISMETT is a leader across Italy, throughout Europe, and worldwide.

UPMC ISMETT provides pediatric patients with the most advanced care for liver and kidney transplants. Also, UPMC ISMETT is recognized as a regional reference center for the treatment of children with rare diseases.

Pediatric Surgery Procedures

Pediatric Surgery Procedures (Non-Transplant)

- Kasai
- STEP for bowel lengthening
- Surgery for malignant and benign tumors
- Hepatobiliary and gastrointestinal surgery
- Vascular shunting for the management of portal hypertension
- **Meso-Rex bypass surgery** for pediatric portal hypertension, an innovative technique that was invented by Prof. Jean de Ville de Goyet, who was appointed director of Pediatric Abdominal Surgery and Liver Transplantation at UPMC ISMETT in 2017. Patients travel to UPMC ISMETT for this specialized procedure that's performed in very few centers worldwide.

Milana's Story

First child to be cured of hepatitis C after a liver transplant

"Milana is now doing well, her liver works perfectly, and there is no trace of the hepatitis C virus in her body."

Milana was born with biliary atresia and eventually developed end-stage liver disease. In Ukraine, where she was initially treated, she also contracted the hepatitis C virus, likely after a blood transfusion. At UPMC ISMETT, the young girl received a living-related liver transplant, thanks to her mother, and then underwent an experimental protocol to treat the hepatitis C virus.



Scan the QR code to read Milana's full story.



Surgery Programs

Transplantation is not the only answer to end-stage organ failure. Some cases can be successfully treated with medical therapies, surgeries, radiologic, or endoscopic procedures. Services are also available for patients who do not need transplantation but endure complex diseases.

Whenever possible, minimally invasive approaches are used. Surgeries that once involved large incisions are now less invasive. As a result, patients recover more quickly, experience less pain, and suffer fewer complications. UPMC ISMETT surgeons have achieved an unmatched, research-based level of experience and skill in minimally invasive surgery. We tailor each surgery to the patient's unique needs and condition.

Abdominal Surgery

We offer abdominal surgery for the following diseases:

- Focal liver benign and malignant tumors, liver traumas
- Biliary tract: biliary tumors, lithiasis of the gallbladder and of the main biliary duct, acute and chronic inflammatory processes of the gallbladder
- Benign and malignant pancreas tumors; metastatic adenocarcinoma; acute and chronic pancreatitis
- Colon-rectum malignant tumors
- Kidney malignant tumors
- Adrenal gland benign and malignant tumors

Cardiac Surgery

The Cardiac Surgery Program at UPMC ISMETT is dedicated to excellence in patient care and research. Its goal is to provide patients with the best possible surgical options. Procedures performed include:

- Elective and emergency standard coronary surgery
- Valve replacement and repair surgery
- Surgery for thoracic aorta disease, congenital heart disease in adult patients, and heart failure
- Ventricular assist devices (VAD) as a bridge to transplant
- Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) for the treatment of aortic stenosis. UPMC ISMETT is one of Italy's top 20 for the number of TAVI procedures performed. We were one of the first hospitals in the world to utilize this innovative technology.

Thoracic Surgery

Thoracic surgery focuses on the treatment of lung, esophageal, and mediastinal diseases. Our advanced technology allows us to perform numerous thoracic procedures, many minimally invasively. This results in shorter hospital stays and faster recovery times. Procedures we perform include:

- Minimally invasive surgery for lung resection, esophagectomy, repair of hernias, achalasia, Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), and esophageal diverticula
- VATS (video-assisted thoracic surgery)
- Mediastinal surgery (thymectomy, mediastinoscopy, pericardial window)
- Surgery of the pleura (pneumothorax, pleural effusion, decortication)
- Tracheal resection and tracheal surgery
- Resection of intra-thoracic goiters
- Endoscopic diagnostic and interventional procedures on the airway (including Endobronchial Ultrasound - EBUS)
- Chest wall procedures
- Venovenous extra-corporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO)
- Thyroidectomies



Surgical Oncology

At UPMC ISMETT, we provide state-of-the-art surgical services for a wide range of malignant and benign tumors, including:

- Hepato-bilio-pancreatic surgery
- Thoracic oncologic surgery
- Medical oncology
- Hepato-bilio-pancreatic endoscopy
- Interventional radiology procedures

Procedure Helps Young Swedish Patient

Innovative Meso-Rex bypass technique performed to address a portal cavernoma.

“The umbilical vein can in these cases be put back ‘in service’ and make a normal life for older children.”

An eight-year-old girl from Sweden arrived in Palermo to be treated for a portal cavernoma, which is an obstruction of a section of the portal vein that prevents blood flow from the intestine to the liver. A Meso-Rex bypass procedure was performed for the first time ever using an umbilical vein instead of the conventional jugular vein.

Scan the QR code to read the full story.



Inpatient Accommodations

Our hospital rooms are suites, similar to hotel suites. They offer a private and comfortable atmosphere and are equipped with the following:

- Kitchen: microwave, refrigerator, and other kitchen supplies
- Main living area: couch, a strongbox, and in-room entertainment including satellite TV (allowing for a wide range of foreign channels), computer, Internet access, telephone, printer
- Ensuite bathroom

One family member is permitted to stay with the patient at all times. Meals are included and complimentary for both patient and family member.

Cultural Services

We assist with cultural, dietary, and religious needs. In addition, patients and families are offered a liaison for connection to ethnic communities in the Palermo area.

Support for International Patients

To provide the highest level of attention, each patient is assigned a coordinator who offers support from the time contact is established, until the day the patient returns to his/her own country. Afterward, the coordinator keeps in touch with the patient and local doctors to make sure that proper follow-up is guaranteed. The International Patient Services Coordinator will be the primary point of contact.

By performing a variety of services, our team strives to handle all logistics, so patients and their families can focus on treatment, healing, and spending time together.

Hospital and Financial Services

Assistance with the hospital admissions process includes:

- Cost estimates and billing inquiries: a precise estimate is made after receiving up-to-date clinical information on the patient's current condition.
- IT support and assistance with international communication
- Periodic medical updates to international institutions and local doctors in home countries

Clinical Support

Support for clinical services includes:

- Interpreter service during hospitalization
- Mobile phone with pre-paid credit for use by a patient or family member while in Palermo
- Supervision of clinical schedule
- Fast track for outpatient services

Travel Assistance

Arrangements for accommodations depend on each patient's needs and may include:

- Assistance with visa requests and extensions, and permits of stay
- Arrangements for air and ground travel, airport pick-up service upon arrival, and departure from Palermo



How to Get Started

For an evaluation and treatment at UPMC ISMETT, the first step is to send us a recent medical summary (in Italian or English) including complete medical history and suggested treatment, to ips@ismett.edu.

Upon receipt of this information, an International Traveling Patient Services team member will be in touch with you and your doctors to offer help in addressing pretreatment concerns and inquiries.

Partnering with Referring Physicians

We understand the value a patient's referring physician brings to continuity of care. We are committed to maintaining open communications at every stage of a patient's journey. We offer extensive communication with referring physicians including updates on procedures, treatments, and follow-up care for the best long-term outcomes.

Partnering with Embassies and Health Ministries

Our experienced team is dedicated to addressing the needs of health ministries and embassies around the world. Our liaisons are available to respond to your questions by phone or email to ensure optimal continuity of patient care.

Partnering with Insurance Providers

For insurance providers and case managers, our team of experts will help you to assess our services, physicians, and fees. We provide prompt information regarding clinical care, outcomes data, and pricing for the evaluation and referral process.

UPMC

Based in Pittsburgh, PA (U.S.), UPMC is a globally recognized academic medical center and integrated health care provider and insurer. Working in close collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences, UPMC shares its clinical, managerial, and technological skills worldwide. With more than 100,000 employees, 40 hospitals, 800 doctors' offices and outpatient sites, and a 4-million-member Insurance Services Division, UPMC works with public and private partners around the world to provide access to the best possible care close to home.

UPMC has more than 20 years of multinational experience, operating hospitals and cancer centers in Italy and Ireland while providing clinical expertise and counsel in other countries. Our international team routinely brings innovation and global expertise to identify and assess what is needed to implement high-quality health care solutions.

Learn more about UPMC and its international operations at [UPMC.com/International](https://www.upmc.com/International).



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