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NASA Study Explores Drones for Faster Organ Transport

Poonam Sharma, Sujatha Suriyamoorthi
MOHAN Foundation, India

Could drones help deliver organs more quickly for transplantation? A recent NASA-led study in Virginia suggests they may have an important role to play.

Scientists have succeeded in transporting two human kidneys using a drone, which is beyond the operator's visual line of sight. The organs were flown on June 5, 2026 over NASA's Langley Research Center test range, 7.5 miles from their starting point, in two 15-minute flights. Laboratory examinations carried out before and after the flights have proven that the organs were not damaged.

Conducted jointly with LifeNet Health and the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), this study focused on the possibility of improving the 'first-mile' and 'last-mile' segments of the transport process. While drones may not replace conventional methods, they can support existing methods by providing faster transportation of organs in difficult-to-reach areas and dense urban areas.

The study used organs donated for research and further research and approval would be required before drones can be used in transplant logistics.

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Sunil Shroff,
MOHAN Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
Email: shroff@mohanfoundation.org