Innovative program enables patients who are obese to get kidney transplants

Video	Audio
Nats of walking	"Come on, Mace."
	"These walks are pretty important to me."
	Wells Larsen is on a path …
Wells Larsen	"Absolutely."
	… to recovery.
Wells Larsen	"This walk is nice because it's so close to the river, and it's just nice to hear when you're walking."
	It's a path he never thought he'd be on a few years ago.
Wells Larsen	"What's up, guys? Come on, girl."
	At 22 years old, Wells was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease …
Wells' Wife	"Want to come up?"
	… something members of his family have also had, including his mother who passed away from the disease.
Wells Larsen Patient	"I weighed probably at my highest 350-ish pounds. And when my kidney function got to right around 20%, I came here looking for a transplant."
	A self-described "meat-and-potatoes guy," Wells didn't start taking his health seriously until he was in his mid-30s and his kidney function was declining rapidly.
Wells Larsen	"But I almost want to say that that ship had sailed at that time."
	Often, patients whose body mass index, or BMI, is too high aren't able to get a transplant because of the higher risks of complications before and during surgery. While he tried to lose the weight on his own, Wells wasn't able to meet the criteria for transplant and was made inactive on the transplant waitlist.

Tayyab Diwan, M.D. **Transplantation Surgery** **Mayo Clinic**	"Many programs will … their approach to things like obesity is that when they get a referral and the patient's BMI is outside the criteria for transplant, they just won't work them up."
Nats door knocking	But Dr. Ty Diwan, a Mayo Clinic transplant surgeon, believes obesity doesn't have to be an automatic no for transplant.
Dr. Diwan	"Obesity is becoming a much greater issue every year. So it's not something that's kind of getting better. And, so, we need to figure out a better way to evaluate patients like that."
	He, along with Mayo Clinic Nephrologist Dr. Aleksandra Kukla …
Dr. Kukla	"Yes."
	… helped create a unique new program to help patients with higher BMIs, like Wells, lose the weight necessary to get them to transplant.
Aleksandra Kukla, M.D. **Nephrology** **Mayo Clinic**	"We were able to create that very coordinated, collaborative program. And that's around the time that we reached out to Mr. Larson and helped him to go through the program."
Dr. Diwan	"Through our process, you know, he went and saw the endocrinologist. He went and saw the psychologist, the dietitian."
	Wells was one of the first patients in the new program, which, in his case, included bariatric surgery to accelerate weight loss.
Wells Larsen	"My recovery was fantastic. And the weight just started melting off."
	Within six months, Wells had lost enough weight through not only the bariatric surgery, but also making lifestyle changes when it comes to diet and exercise.
Dr. Diwan	"He lost over 80 pounds, almost in that six-month period. I mean, he looks like a different person."
Wells Larsen	"Let's go, Wally."
	Wells was placed on the active transplant list, and within two weeks, he got the call he never expected he'd get so soon.
Wells Larsen	"And they said, 'Hello, Mr. Larson. We have a kidney offer for you. Please call us back.' That, that rocked my world."
	Dr. Diwan says Wells is the perfect example of what they're trying to achieve with this new program.
Dr. Diwan	"This is why it's just great is because we took a

	patient who was just not even considered a candidate and within a six-month time, off dialysis with a functioning kidney, normal creatinine. And he's actually going to live a lot longer. And now he's got a kidney, which is going to make him live longer."
Wells Larsen	"I'm trying to not look too far ahead, just because I think this year is really about recovery. But, yeah, travel is a big thing for us in general."
	Wells and his wife have plans to visit Disney World next December.
Wells Larsen	"I'm going to focus on getting my walking mileage up."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm DeeDee Stiepan.