

Hospital recasts transplant rules

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EDMONTON (CP) — An Edmonton hospital is revising and rewording its organ transplant rules following a challenge by the parents of a Calgary teen with Down's syndrome.

Transplant candidates will no longer be required to have what the policy called "satisfactory intelligence," said officials from the University of Alberta Hospital Tuesday.

But there's still no guarantee 17-year-old Terry Urquhart will make the waiting list for a lung transplant when his case comes up for review next Wednesday.

There are only enough hearts and lungs to save two of every three people already on the waiting list, said Dr.

Dennis Modry, head of the University transplant unit.

The revised rules require all transplant candidates be able to care for themselves after a transplant, he said.

Failing that, they might qualify with a family capable of caring for them.

The old rules were designed to ensure scarce transplant organs went to people whose chance of survival was strongest.

Terry's parents Kathy Urquhart and Moe Fillion have tried for nine months to get their son on the transplant waiting list. Doctors have given him five years to live without a new lung. His own is defective because of

a congenital heart condition.

Urquhart and Fillion said the hospital refused to consider their son because of his disability.

Down's syndrome is caused by a chromosome abnormality. It results in mental disability and can be accompanied by heart defects as well as hearing or sight problems.

But hospital officials said Tuesday Terry's parents misunderstood their rationale for not immediately approving the transplant.

Terry was the first patient with

Down's syndrome to request a transplant at the hospital and administrators put the case on hold while they reviewed their policy, Modry said.

"I don't think (the policy) was ever discriminatory."

Last week, protesters supporting Terry demonstrated outside the hospital and the legislature.

However, the hospital received more than 90 calls last week from callers opposing a transplant for the former Special Olympian, said hospital spokeswoman Prudence Taylor.