COVID vaccines aren’t generating antibodies for 10 million people in the US alone, including transplant recipients, who take immunosuppressants. What should they do?

For many people like [Alicia Merritt,] a liver transplant patient who must take immunosuppressants daily to prevent her body from rejecting the organ, the vaccines are proving less effective than for people with normal immune systems, a new study found.

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Some are taking a third shot to try to jar their immune systems into generating the antibodies that protect them from the virus. Others are considering modifying their immunosuppressants in consultation with their doctors in hopes another shot will be effective. And a few are jumping through bureaucratic hoops to get access to monoclonal antibodies, which could provide protection until more people in the general population are vaccinated.

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In a paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, [transplant surgeon Dr. Dorry] Segev’s team found that 46% of transplant recipients had no antibodies after two vaccination shots. Of the 54% who did develop antibodies, their levels were generally lower than people with normal immune systems.

Dr. Segev said he is hoping for approval soon from federal authorities to launch a study of the effect of giving transplant patients a booster shot. There is a theoretical risk that the immune activation might cause rejections or other problems with the transplanted organs, he said.

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