Wolverines For Life: Saving Lives Through Collaboration

Wolverines For Life began as a collective effort between the University of Michigan, the American Red Cross, Gift of Life Michigan, Be The Match national marrow donor registry and the Michigan Eye-Bank. The goal since the beginning has been to educate the entire U-M community about the need for donors and to implement a zero-tolerance policy for wait list deaths. In its first two years, Wolverines For Life has achieved many successes and reached countless people with strong messages promoting donation.

In the Fall of 2011, Wolverines For Life partnered with Michigan Athletics to create the biggest donation drive ever on the University of Michigan campus, called “Be a Hero at The Big House.” For an entire 12-hour day in November, the Jack Roth Stadium Club at Michigan Stadium was home to the highly successful event. People donated blood, registered as organ and tissue donors, and registered as bone marrow donors, all with a breathtaking view of the stadium from high above the gridiron. Radio and TV stations were broadcasting live from the event, and it drew an impressive crowd including U-M Athletic Director David Brandon and Michigan Secretary of State Ruth Johnson.

During the 2011 football season, the Wolverines For Life collaboration helped Michigan to win over Ohio in two important ways: organ and tissue donation and blood donation on our respective University campuses. These wins will be repeated in 2012, as will the Be a Hero at The Big House event. This year’s event will take place on Sunday, November 4 at Michigan Stadium.

The Wolverines For Life effort was created from within our Transplant Center but today has grown across all three University of Michigan campuses. Encompassing many schools, colleges, sports teams, student groups, community organizations and individuals, it has become a true University of Michigan community enterprise. The future of Wolverines For Life may well be the expansion to other universities. Our wonderful experience drawing resources and enthusiasm from medical, academic, social and athletic arenas is something that could be duplicated at other institutions. It is all about saving lives and increasing donation, and those are things that contribute to a win for everyone.

– Bob Garypie

Learn more about Wolverines For Life at the website www.wolverinesforlife.org and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WolverinesForLife
How Old Are You On the Inside and Can We Make You Younger?

The hardest part of a transplant surgeon’s job is determining who to operate on. Surgeons are well aware that they need to try to assure that precious donor organs go to patients who will thrive following transplantation. Each organ has the potential to add dozens of years of life and no surgeon wants to waste this lifesaving potential on a transplant candidate who will not tolerate a major surgical procedure.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to identify these patients who will not do well. Certainly, other medical problems such as heart disease and lung disease are considered when we select patients for transplantation. In addition, the tireless social workers assess whether potential transplant candidates will be appropriate stewards of these precious organs. Finally, significant consideration is given to patient age as a risk factor. Ultimately, the primary factor in determining suitability for major surgery for transplantation is what we call the “eye ball test.”

Moreover, you frequently know a patient is not going to do well just by looking at them. It is very difficult to tell a patient and their family that they are not a transplant candidate based on this relatively subjective assessment. Overall, a surgeon’s approach to clinical decision-making is largely subjective, difficult to communicate to patients and clinicians, and better ways are needed to determine whether patients are suitable for major surgery such as transplantation.

Using CT scans to determine how old patients are on the inside

Prior to major surgery, patients get numerous studies in the radiology department. As surgeons and radiologist look at these images, they primarily focus on “the pathology.” However, these images contain vast amounts of additional data specific to the patient that is never formally assessed. The data in these images may inform operative risk assessments, adding objectivity to the “eyeball test.” Considering that there are characteristic changes associated with aging, our group has developed novel methods to essentially “age” someone based on their body composition noted on CAT scan. For example, the patient in the CAT scan in the picture is 74 years old, but has the characteristics on CAT scan of someone significantly younger. Generally, age over 70 precludes transplantation, but this individual may be a good candidate.

Our population of over 1,500 kidney donors has been critical for this work. The CAT scans that these individuals had prior to kidney donation helped our group determine what the normal characteristics...
of aging are among healthy individuals. Once we determined “normal,” our patients who need transplants or other major surgery can be compared based on their CAT scans, and a morphometric age can be determined. Our initial work indicates that morphometric age is remarkably associated with surgical outcomes. For example, we determined the morphometric age for 1,500 patients having major surgery. We divided these patients into 3 groups: the young group, the middle age group, and old group. The patients in the middle age group that we scored as young on the inside had a postoperative mortality rate of 4.5%. (see Figure at right) Conversely, the patients in the middle age group who we scored as old on the inside at a mortality rate of 21.4%. Most impressively, the oldest patients who we scored as young did just as well as the youngest patients in the study. Overall, CAT scans seem like they may be very helpful in determining which patients will do well with major surgery.

**Can we make you younger inside?**

The characteristics on CT scan that most strongly correlated with surgical outcomes were primarily trunk musculature. These muscles are also known as the “core muscles.” These are the same muscles that personal trainers and yoga instructors urge us to work out. We’re not sure if we can make you younger inside, but intuitively we can probably better help patients prepare for major surgery. Surprisingly, helping patients prepare for major surgery with wellness training is a new concept.

Our research group is taking several approaches towards “perioperative optimization.” One focus is on specific trunk related exercises, muscle changes on cross-sectional imaging, and postsurgical outcomes. In addition, our group is focusing on frailty among liver transplant candidates, and whether any of the frail state can be reversed while a patient waits liver transplantation.

Most importantly, we have started a clinical program for perioperative optimization. Now when patients are scheduled for major surgery, they undergo an assessment to identify the highest risk patients. Part of this assessment is determining their morphometric age. In this process, patients who are determined to be particularly high risk will be enrolled in the Michigan Surgical and Health Optimization Program at the Preoperative Clinic at University Michigan. This program includes smoking cessation counseling, dietary counseling, respiratory exercises, and a pre-operative exercise regimen. The goals of this program include getting patients in better shape prior to major surgery. As importantly, this program aims to empower patients to actively participate and affect their surgical outcomes.

Overall, our group hopes that developing a better understanding of why patients do not do well following major surgery, including transplantation, will help us design better approaches to make sure that each organ recipient is optimally prepared to receive their “gift of life.”

– *Mike Englesbe, MD*
The success of the Transplant Center’s annual gala event is due to the commitment of volunteers. Many of the committee members have been part of the event’s success since the beginning. We asked some of them a few questions:

**Claudia Rediske**

“Giving back to the transplant center is one way to say thank you. You can never repay a life but you can help to make some else’s live better and happier.”

**Some favorite memories:**

“The arrest of Ms. Vicki, bringing in big bucks for the Christmas trees I designed and donated.”

“Cultivating new good friends by helping each other on the committee with the goal of making the Vita better each year. After working together for many years the committee members have become dear friends.”

**How the Vita has changed over the years:**

“Each year it improves and I hope to make it continue to grow. It has become an upscale upbeat event with great speakers.”

“I am impressed that we have committee members who have offered to help from all sides of organ transplantation, including those who have received and members of donor families.”

“The Vita creates an atmosphere that brings together people who give from the heart.”

**Future goals:**

“To see it grow with more attendees.”

“Each person on the committee has a specialty that they bring to the group that makes the success of the Vita.”

**Other:**

“We did not attend Michigan as students, but we are connected because of Harold’s transplant. We are now big Michigan fans.”

“Enjoy your life no matter your illness.”

“I hope that we can help and do whatever we can. No matter what we’ll give it a try.”

**Jacquie Lewis-Kemp**

“I got involved with the Vita Redita because Richard Chenault asked me to. We had gone to high school together. When he found out that I was on dialysis he encouraged me to come to U-M. That’s where I received my kidney transplant.”

**Involvement:**

“I continued to be involved with the Vita because it’s fun! The event is just wonderful.”

“It feels good to give back to the organization that continues to prolong my life.”

**Some favorite memories:**

“Each year it is so magnificent. I like the feeling I go home with. I feel like I have given to a worthy cause.”

“Getting in a bidding war and winning the Christmas Tree designed by Claudia Rediske. It was such a popular item that Claudia agreed to make another.”

**How the Vita has changed over the years:**

“We know better each year what the people like to see. We have honed in on the aspects that people like about the event. We know what to expect to see while adding a few new things.”

**Future goals:**

“I would like to see it (the Vita Redita) blow up to something that makes a ton of money for the Transplant Center. It should be the most talked about event in Southeast Michigan.”
Nick Just

“I am a two-time liver transplant recipient. U-M has saved my life twice. It is an amazing group you have working there.”

“I think of all the things that I have been able to do since my transplants. I wanted to live long enough to see my children married and to have grandchildren. My daughter just got married a few weeks ago. Instead of offering favors to her guests she handed out cards that said “In lieu of a traditional favor, we have donated to the University of Michigan Transplant Center.”

“I owe my life to the doctors and nurses and have become a lifetime supporter of the Transplant Center. They give people back their lives.”

How the Vita has changed over the years:

“It’s grown so much. We have had to leave two lovely venues because we’ve out grown the space.”

“Keep changing because change is always good.”

Future goals:

“I hope to continue to the legacy of having access to great venues. If we can top what we’ve done in the past we have to try to. We have to continue to raise money for the future of U-M Transplant.”

Other:

“The Vita is already the #1 fundraising for Transplants in the State of Michigan.”

“Every little bit is a big help.”

“If you haven’t been to the Vita you have to buy a ticket to attend. It’s not only about the Transplant Center it’s about seeing those who have now had a second chance at life because of the work of the Transplant Center.”

Karen Morey

“I got involved with the Vita while working with Roche Pharmaceuticals. We had given a donation and decided to work with the committee as well. Then I went to camp and decided to stay on the committee.”

“Going to camp is my favorite week of the year.”

“Once you find out what the money is being raised for it’s a no brainer, you have to help out.”

“Once you see what happens will all realms of transplant, it is important to get the word out. It comes full circle.”

Some favorite memories:

“The elegance of the Vita is my favorite memory. With all the food, the preparation, the auction items and the decorations all present, it’s hard not to be impressed.”

“The Vita is supposedly a top-of-the-line event, and it is. Nothing beats the Vita.”

Involvement:

“I have been involved with the Vita Redita since its first year. I worked a lot on helping to develop the concept and worked on the silent auction items.”

“I am now an honorary committee member.”

Some favorite memories:

“I bought a table and attended for a few years. I brought my friends with me and they enjoyed themselves.”

“It is always a very nice experience and each year it gets better.”

“Everyone who works on the Vita goes above and beyond their call of duty.”

Other:

“U-M Transplant has amazing research going on. I am working with Dr. Fontana to help to release a drug for curing Hepatitis-C. We are working on getting celebrities to talk to congress about this pill.”
The Transplant Center Events Office is busy planning great things for 2012, including two unique events in the Jack Roth Stadium Club overlooking Michigan Stadium this fall. Every event depends on the generosity of sponsors and the commitment of volunteers. Whether you help out for a couple hours or you devote time to a volunteer committee position, you can make a difference for our patients and families.

Transplant Surgeons are the Waiters! Dinner at Zingerman’s Roadhouse
Wednesday, June 6 at 6:30 pm
Zingerman’s Roadhouse
2501 Jackson Road
Ann Arbor, MI

Thanks to the generosity of Zingerman’s Roadhouse, we are continuing the tradition of kicking off the summer with a special dinner. Chef Alex Young was recognized as the Best Chef in the Great Lakes region by the James Beard Foundation in 2011 and he is sharing his talent with our Transplant Center once again on June 6. Chef Alex is planning a tremendous menu including asparagus and crab soup, grilled organic salmon or Chicken Chausseur, rice pudding brulée and more, all served by the Transplant Center’s Surgeons! This year’s waitstaff will include Drs. Mike Englesbe, John Magee, Shawn Pelletier, Jeff Punch, Chris Sonnenday, Randy Sung and Ted Welling.

Tickets are $100 per person and include four courses and wine. There will be a brief live auction including a private dinner cooked in your home by Chef Alex himself! This event will sell out; please make your reservations early by calling Zingerman’s Roadhouse directly at 734-663-3663.

9th Annual Camp Michitanki Golf Classic presented by Victory Honda
Sunday, June 24
Registration begins at 10:00 am
Shotgun start at 12:30 pm
Golden Fox at Fox Hills
Plymouth, MI

Golfers will enjoy the opportunity to meet our returning event host, NHL referee Dan O’Halloran, at the Camp Michitanki Golf Classic. Our Camp Michitanki Golf Classic is a favorite of golfers. The event will be on the Golden Fox course at Fox Hills of Plymouth, Michigan. This is a first-class event that draws golfers back year after year. The scramble format allows golfers of all abilities to come and enjoy the day on a pristine championship course. Registration includes lunch, golf with cart, dinner, beverages and open bar all day, driving range privileges, logo memento gifts, and more.

All proceeds benefit our Camp Michitanki, sending transplant recipient children to summer camp! We are grateful to Victory Honda for returning as our presenting sponsor this year and many more sponsorship opportunities remain available. Individual golfer registration is only $150, which includes golf, lunch, dinner & open bar. Non-golfers are welcome to come for the dinner and auction for only $50.

Register yourself or your foursome online at www.firstgiving.com/michigantransplant or simply call our office. To learn more about sponsoring or donating an auction item the event by please contact Melissa Goodson at 734-232-0594 or maswain@umich.edu.
2nd Annual Be A Hero at The Big House
Sunday, November 4

Our Transplant Center is a proud member of the Wolverines For Life. This year’s Be A Hero at the Big House will take place on Sunday, November 4. There will be opportunities to donate blood, register as a bone marrow donor, and register as an organ and tissue donor. The event includes free parking and is open to the public. Please help us spread the word so we can make it the biggest donor drive in the history of Michigan! You can learn more at the web site www.wolverinesforlife.org.

10th Annual Vita Redita Gala Dinner and Auction
Saturday, September 29
Jack Roth Stadium Club, Michigan Stadium
Ann Arbor, MI

We are celebrating the landmark 10th anniversary of the Vita Redita (Latin for Life Restored). The event that started as the dream of a small group of Transplant Center supporters has grown to become one of Ann Arbor’s most elegant and highly anticipated parties of the year.

On Saturday, September 29th we have the great privilege and honor of hosting the 10th annual Vita Redita Gala Dinner and Auction at Michigan Stadium in the Jack Roth Stadium Club. This space was just recently opened for special functions. We will be one of the first university groups to use this coveted venue.

Tickets for this event are available by contacting Melissa Goodson at 734.232.0594 or maswain@umich.edu. Ticket prices are $175 per person and include gourmet appetizers, strolling dinner, premium bar and an extravagant dessert bar. It also includes a fantastic silent and live auction and live music. The Vita Redita is known to be an over the top, classy event in support of the University of Michigan Transplant Center. Sponsorships and auction items are being accepted.

For the latest information about our events, including confirmed dates, locations and times, please visit www.facebook.com/UMTransplantEvents, or call our events office at 734-232-0594.
Volunteer Spotlight: Curtis Gough

Curtis Gough holds a photo of his sister, Angie Gough

The Transplant Center counts on volunteers to assure the success of many of our efforts and events. Sometimes a volunteer gets very involved, but their connection to us isn’t immediately apparent. That is the case with Curtis Gough. Curtis has attended the Vita Redita since its beginning in 2003. He has donated jewelry for the auction, purchased tables, brought many guests, and participated on the planning committee for years. Curtis always told us that he found the Transplant Center to be a compelling and worthwhile cause. In 2010, he shared a very personal story with me that explained just why he understands our mission so well.

Curtis grew up in Indiana in a family of jewelers. His earliest memories are of family gatherings where his entire extended family, including children, shared in the craft of making fine jewelry. Learning from one another, and always pushing the envelope of creativity, Curtis was encouraged to explore his talent for creating elegant and unique works of art. Curtis grew up in the shadow of his older sister, Angie.

Angie was a gifted artist, creating jewelry pieces alongside her family members. Beyond that, she was successful in academics and was a stunningly beautiful young lady. Angie competed in pageants, served as Homecoming Queen, and after graduation began studying at Indiana University. She planned to study medicine and become a pediatrician.

Tragically, Angie was involved in an automobile accident at age 19 and did not survive. Her brother Curtis was just 18 years old at the time of her death. When his family agreed to donate Angie’s organs, the concept was completely new to Curtis. He told me, “at the time, it was something I didn’t quite understand because I was a year younger than she was. As I grew older, I began to understand the importance of organ donation.” Indeed, Curtis learned that the gift of life was a lasting legacy of his sister Angie.

“I give to the Transplant Center and support the Vita Redita to honor my sister’s memory.” Curtis said. Not only did Angie give the gift of life, but her brother Curtis continues to support our effort to save lives through transplantation. “I donate to many causes, but this one is the one that means more to me than any of the others,” Curtis told me. The Transplant Center is fortunate to have friends like Curtis and his family in the community. Because of his generosity and commitment to our success, we are able to continue to build on our tradition of saving lives and doing all we can for our patients and families.

-- Bob Garypie

Today, Curtis is the proprietor of La Jolla Fine Jewelry in Chelsea, Michigan, where he designs and creates unique works of jewelry art. Curtis created incredible one-of-a-kind pieces such as necklaces, bracelets and earrings each year to donate to the Vita Redita. The pieces are sold at the event auction and have brought many thousands of dollars to the Transplant Center over the years.
Among the most highly touted benefits of the space program are the spin-offs—technological advances that can be applied outside the space program. Research in transplantation might also generate spin-offs. This article describes a spin-off that came from research into ways of restoring the ability of the immune system to fight infection in those who take immunosuppressive drugs.

Immunosuppressive drugs prevent rejection of transplants but also compromise the ability of the immune system to control infection and infection poses the greatest threat to recipients of transplants. Several years ago, Drs. Platt and Cascalho of the University of Michigan Transplantation Biology Program and members of their laboratories developed a method that might restore immunity in those with organ transplants. The method involved administering blood stem cells in a way that generates new immune system tissue. What they actually did was to inject stem cells originally obtained to treat cancer but no longer needed, into pigs to see if the cells could develop into new immune tissue. As Drs. Platt and Cascalho had hoped, the blood stem cells generated immune cells that could attack viruses and toxins, and might thus eventually find use in treating chronic infections or tumors.

However, the blood stem cells also did something entirely unanticipated. The blood cells fused with other cells of the pigs leading to formation of hybrid cells, that is cells having genetic material from both of the cells that fused. Besides being hybrids, these mixed cells had a life of their own. They contributed to the formation of tissues and organs unrelated to the immune system and so they seemed to have the possibility of being used to repair tissues damaged by disease.

But another, even more striking, observation would come from the study of these cells. Xiaofeng Zhou, a research fellow working with Drs. Platt and Cascalho, generated hybrid cells by fusing normal intestinal cells and found that some hybrids exhibited even more unusual behavior—the hybrids could divide without restraint and grew like cancer cells and when introduced into animals they formed tumors. The hybrids also had genetic abnormalities similar to those observed in cancer. For many years scientists have tried to understand how normal cells develop the genetic defects that allow them to become cancer. Now it seemed an explanation had come into focus. The fusion of cells during the inflammation and tissue injury seen in the lung from smoking, the intestine from inflammatory bowel disease, the liver from hepatitis and the skin from overexposure to sunlight might generate hybrid cells that undergo the genetic changes that in turn lead to cancer.

These observations suggest new ways to prevent certain cancers. Some of the molecules that promote fusion of cells have been identified and could serve as targets for new types of drugs. Even more interesting may be Dr. Zhou’s recent discovery of an enzyme that prevents the genetic changes that ensue when cells fuse. Perhaps this enzyme can be marshaled toward the prevention of cancer.

This, a project which began with the goal of solving one complication of transplantation—immunodeficiency—may have ended up addressing another complication—cancer. Perhaps someday patients and doctors in fields of medicine entirely unrelated to transplantation will see transplantation as benefiting many beyond the relative few who receive new organs. Since transplantation heightens the risk of cancer the spin-offs might also help transplant recipients.
Our administrator, Anne Murphy, was honored in April for her unfailing commitment to promote donation of life-saving organs, tissue and bone marrow in the state of Michigan. Murphy was instrumental in the creation and continuing success of Wolverines for Life: a new, unusual partnership between the U-M Health System, U-M Athletics and other University of Michigan groups, schools and departments, along with the American Red Cross, Be the Match/National Marrow Donor Program, Gift of Life Michigan and the Michigan Eye-Bank. Wolverines for Life actively works throughout the year to promote life-saving donation.

Under her leadership, Wolverines for Life hosted an unprecedented donor drive last fall, Be a Hero at the Big House, at Michigan Stadium. At that event, participants got a VIP view from the club level and also could donate blood, sign up on the Michigan Organ Donor Registry and be screened for bone marrow donation and tour the club-level seating area. The event will take place again this fall on November 4.

Johnson announced the award at an event promoting organ donation in Flint on Tuesday. The Organ & Tissue Donation Shining Star Award honors exceptional dedication, outstanding support, novel partnerships and/or extraordinary efforts in the area of organ and tissue donor awareness.

“For years, Anne Murphy has made raising awareness about organ donation and the Michigan Organ Donor Registry her mission,” Johnson said. “As a member of the Wolverines for Life team, she has spearheaded several successful awareness campaigns and registration events, bringing hope to thousands of people affected by organ and tissue donation. For this, Anne is truly a ‘shining star.’”

Johnson, vowing to improve Michigan’s numbers, last year directed SOS employees, time permitting, to ask every customer if they wanted to join Michigan’s organ donor registry. It resulted in record increases in sign-ups, including a 62 percent jump last month over March 2011. Her other efforts in partnership with organ donor advocates included the creation of an advisory task force, educational efforts and reminders on widely used forms. She also supported a new Donate Life Month license plate, available this summer, to promote organ, tissue and eye donation.

Anne Murphy, MBA, has more than 25 years of experience in management of complex organizations, in both the public and private sectors. She has served as the Transplant Center administrator since 2004, where she has responsibility for the performance of all organ transplant programs (heart, lung, kidney, liver and pancreas). This program is one of the largest in the United States, performing over 400 transplants annually.

Murphy has been an active contributor in the national Transplant Management and Growth Collaborative. She is a member of UNOS region 10’s Collaborative Faculty and was an invited speaker at the 2009 National Learning Congress. Additionally, she has served as a peer reviewer for UNOS site surveys. Murphy received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of San Francisco, and holds a Master of Business Administration degree from San Jose State University.

— Mary Masson
New Pediatric Liver and Kidney Transplant Clinic

In December 2011, our pediatric liver and kidney transplant teams moved into new space in the brand new Mott Hospital. From the moment you walk in the doors, the space is inviting, relaxed, open, bright, and very easy to get around. The space was designed with the patience experience in mind. For example, snacks and juice are easily accessible for patients in the clinic areas.

It’s not just the patients that benefit, though. The staff is thrilled with the new location. Pediatric liver transplant nurse Vicki Shieck says “the space is phenomenal. The clinic rooms are bigger so wheelchairs and larger families don’t feel crowded.”

Faculty and staff space is also much better than ever before. Staff teams like pediatric liver transplant have their own staff rooms. Shieck says “not having to share space makes us much more efficient. Our medical assistants and clerical staff love the space and they are phenomenal. Everybody is totally devoted to our patients and families.”

2012 Transplant Center Employee of the Year

Our Transplant Center is staffed by dozens of thoughtful, talented and dedicated professionals. Each Spring one special employee is recognized among the many who are nominated for the honor. Our 2012 award winner is Amy Smith. Her nomination included this review of her contributions:

“Amy Smith is an extraordinary individual, and an outstanding clinician; hardworking, compassionate and patient. There is no one more trustworthy, more sensible or more dedicated. Her patients recognize their good fortune in being entrusted to her care, and her colleagues acknowledge her exceptionalism. She sets a standard of excellence to which we each should aspire.”

We are pleased to acknowledge Amy’s contributions to our program. Congratulations, Amy!

Transplant Specialty Pharmacy Services Earns 2011 Clinical Services Program of the Year

In 1983 the Executive Director of the University of Michigan Hospital and Health Centers (UMHHC) established a process for recognizing noteworthy programs. Meritorious programs were nominated and selected by the Hospitals’ Senior Management Team on an annual basis each fall. Programs receiving “Program of the Year” status are formally recognized at the Administrative Forum meeting in December; and, at the Hospitals and Health Centers Executive Board meeting usually in January and/or February.

The Transplant Specialty Pharmacy is multi-disciplinary collaboration between the Transplant Center and the Department of Pharmacy. The Transplant Pharmacy provides high touch mail order pharmacy services to UMHS transplant recipients. The Transplant Pharmacy is committed to providing exceptional customer service. The Transplant Pharmacy offers pharmacist consultation, financial counseling, and support services to support patients throughout the entire treatment process. For more information visit the Transplant Pharmacies website at www.pharm.med.umich.edu/transplant_pharmacy

Would you like to receive occasional updates and news from the Transplant Center? Join our email list by sending us an email telling us to include you in our list at transplantcenter@umich.edu
A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

At the beginning of February, the Transplant Center started a new project allowing us to reach out to referring physicians and update them about their patient’s transplant. We created a special thank you card that allows us to include a photo of a patient after he/she has received a transplant. Our medical assistants (MAs) take photos of patients at a post-transplant clinic visit and have them sign a release form allowing us to use their photo. The MAs then pass along the photos and release forms to our clinical outreach coordinator, Stacy Brand, who handles printing the photos, coordinating where to send the card and personalization including when the patient was transplanted and a thank you message. Brand also has the medical and surgical directors from the specific organ program personalize the cards.

Brand says, “We have currently been doing this for the adult kidney, pancreas and liver programs and hope to implement to other programs in the future. This project is a team effort and has received wonderful feedback from our referring physician partners.”

– Bob Garypie

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