



Christopher Sonnenday, M.D., M.H.S.

## The Director's Corner

### Insights and Advancements in Transplantation

Each year, April is set aside as National Donate Life Month. This tradition, begun by National Donate Life America in 2003, is aimed at raising awareness about donation and celebrating the millions of lives impacted by the generosity of organ, eye, and tissue donors each year. Nothing in transplantation happens without the gift of an organ donor – it is the act of generosity upon which our entire field is based, and all of our work is ultimately about honoring that gift.

It is a particularly important time to recognize the generosity of organ donors, because we currently are in the midst of record transplant activity in the US, in the state of Michigan, and at University of Michigan Health. We have experienced 10 consecutive years of increased transplants performed in the US, reflecting a 56% growth in transplants done nationally since 2013. In the state of Michigan, more than 1,000 transplants have been performed, which has occurred only twice in 2018 and again in 2019. This year at our current pace nearly 1,200 transplants will be performed in the state. At U-M Health Transplant Center, we will perform more than 450 transplants in fiscal year 2023 – the busiest year in our 60 year history.

What is driving this remarkable growth in our field? One might guess that there has been some technological breakthrough, or transformative scientific discovery, that has expanded organ donation. The truth is much more simple, and perhaps more powerful – collaboration. Collaboration among the thousands of transplant professionals, organ procurement organization staff, hospital teams, and donors families to ensure that every individual who wants to donate is able to realize that gift. Within the Transplant Center, we are using organs for transplant that have been traditionally discarded. Refined selection strategies, improved preservation technologies, and ongoing collaborative work among our teams to improve recipient outcomes allow us to transplant more patients than ever before.

This demonstration of the power of collaboration is an important reminder to all of us that our systems function better, and our patients have better outcomes, when our collective focus is aligned. At a time when our health care system, and our society, seems more siloed and contentious than ever, the growth in transplantation is a demonstration of the remarkable impact of collaboration.

Those of us privileged to work in transplantation were drawn to this work because transplant is the ultimate team sport. We require partnership with our colleagues, our patients, and their caregivers to make each transplant successful. We are honored to partner with you in our objective to provide transplantation to all in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sonnenday', written in a cursive style.

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