



TEXAS TRANSPLANT INSTITUTE

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Helping the Hopeless: San Antonio's Living Donor Kidney Transplant Program is Top in the Nation

San Antonio, Texas – June 7, 2010 – The Texas Transplant Institute at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital is the nation's leading provider of living donor kidney transplants, according to recently released data from the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), the governmental agency that tracks organ donation and transplantation.

The hospital has achieved this top national ranking through a robust paired exchange program that began in March 2008. Thirty-four percent of the hospital's total living donor kidney transplants are now paired exchanges, a process in which a person who needs a kidney transplant has a friend or family member willing to donate a kidney but who are incompatible. Through management of a detailed database, kidney recipients are paired with an unrelated donor who is a better match due to various immunological factors.

"Our successful program has major national implications," said Francis Wright, M.D., transplant surgeon and director of solid organ transplantation at the Texas Transplant Institute. "It's estimated that more than 6,000 people currently are on the national kidney transplant waiting list with donors who cannot donate because they are not a match. The paired exchange program is the single most important advancement in kidney transplantation over the past two decades."

In 2009, 162 living donor kidney transplants were performed at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital boosting the living donor kidney program into the nation's top spot. So far this year, 74 living donor kidney transplants have been performed at the hospital

The hospital's first kidney donor exchange was in March 2008. To date, 70 people in need of a kidney have received one through either a two- and three-way exchange. Most of these patients are from South Texas, a region with one of the highest rates of diabetes in the country. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of kidney disease. But more and more, the hospital is serving patients from across the country including Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. Some patients have waited years for a life-changing transplant before finding the Texas Transplant Institute. These patients' quality of life is significantly diminished by the need for ongoing kidney dialysis several times a week in some cases.

"Patients needing kidney transplants who have incompatible donors no longer have to take 'no' for an answer. We can offer them hope. We are turning 'no' into 'yes' for many patients who have a willing, but incompatible donor," said Bingaman.

Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital is one of eight acute care hospitals within the Methodist Healthcare System. Texas Transplant Institute merges organ transplant and blood and marrow stem cell transplant programs. Programs include: kidney, pancreas, liver, heart, pediatric and adult blood and marrow stem cell transplantation. Texas Transplant Institute's mission is to provide unsurpassed care, cutting-edge research and exemplary patient education.

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Transplant Patients: Their Stories

Delia Gonzales Silvas

Transplanted July 2008

San Antonio, Texas

Delia Gonzales Silvas, 47, is in her second semester of nursing school--a world away from her life before her kidney transplant. She was a rising Tejano star when she began having symptoms that eventually led to near kidney failure. She went through chemotherapy and other harsh treatment before her doctor said she needed dialysis. "It was so hard--depending on a machine to keep you alive, just struggling to stay alive," Gonzales Silvas said. Then, a friend she had met while performing offered to donate a kidney on her behalf. The surgery was a success. "I am so blessed and fortunate to have a second chance at life," Gonzales Silvas said. "That is why I want to give back. I want to be a nurse so I can help others."

Lawrence Maciariello

Transplanted April 2010

Sarasota, Florida

Lawrence Maciariello, 64, a retired Air Force commander and pilot, knew that kidney disease ran in his family but he wasn't quite prepared for his doctor's news: his kidneys were failing. He went on dialysis but decided he wanted a kidney transplant. He registered with 10 different facilities across the country but most said it could take years before he got a transplant. "I knew I could handle dialysis but it certainly wasn't pleasant. I wanted more of a normal life," Maciariello said. After seven weeks on dialysis, he received his transplant on April 28, 2010 at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital. "They weren't discouraging like all the others and they were the most organized from my experience," Maciariello said of the Texas Transplant Institute staff. "They told me they couldn't make any promises but I knew they would get it done. "TTI is helping so many people and I am their greatest supporter. I have nothing but good things to say about my treatment there. What they do--it's a miracle. People who are on dialysis need to keep their minds open to getting a transplant; they need to contact these good people."

AMANDA NATHAN

Transplanted May 2009

San Antonio, Texas

Amanda Nathan was diagnosed with diabetes at age 12 and had her first kidney transplant about 13 years ago. About three years ago she learned that she needed a new kidney. Nathan said the Mayo Clinic would not work with her because of the antibodies created by her first transplant and because she was a 35-year-old diabetic. Though 25 people offered her a kidney, no one was a match but her best friend donated a kidney on her behalf as part of a three-way exchange. Nathan now provides outreach counseling to patients who are considering a transplant. She guides them in the process. Nathan is a strong advocate of living donor kidney donation. "You have to actively let people know. Tell your co-workers, church members, anyone you know about how simple it is to give a kidney to someone who needs it. People who donate a kidney are truly heroic," Nathan said. "I appreciate the hope and humanity that are such a strong part of the program at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital."