Educate Your Loved Ones On Organ Donation

A ccording to the National Kidney Foundation, over 89,999 U.S. patients are currently waiting for an organ transplant and nearly 4,000 are added each month.

Even though medical advances have greatly improved for organ donation and transplantation over the years there is still a shortage for viable organs and tissues. In an effort to increase awareness of organ and tissue donation, Erlanger’s Kidney Transplant Center would like to share some statistics from the National Kidney Foundation’s website – www.kidney.org – about the importance of organ donation. We ask that you take a moment and share these with your family and friends.

Give the Gift of Life

- Due to the lack of available donors in this country, 3,886 kidney patients, 1,811 liver patients, 457 heart patients, and 483 lung patients died in 2004 while waiting for life-saving organ transplants.

- Acceptable organ donors can range in age from newborn to 65 years or more. People 65 years of age and older may be acceptable donors, particularly for corneas, skin, bone, and for total body donation.

- An estimated 12,000 people who die each year meet the criteria for organ donation, but less than half of those numbers become actual donors.

- By signing the Uniform Donor Card, an individual indicates his or her wish to be a donor. However, at the time of death, the person’s next-to-kin will still be asked to sign a consent form for donation. It is important for people who wish to be an organ and tissue donor to tell their family about this decision so that their wishes will be honored. It is estimated about 35 percent of potential donors never become donors because a family member refuses to give consent.

- All costs related to the donation are paid for by the donor program.

- Tissue donation can enhance the lives of more than 50 people. Donated heart valves, bone, skin, corneas, and connective tissue can be used in vital medical procedures such as heart valve replacements, limb reconstruction following tumor surgery; hip and knee joint reconstruction and in correcting curvature of the spine.

- Donor organs and tissues are removed surgically, and the donor’s body is closed after surgery. There are no outward signs of organ donation and open casket funerals are still possible.

- Acceptable organ donors are those who are “brain dead” but whose heart and lungs continue to function with the use of ventilators. Brain death is a legal definition of death.

- Organ transplant recipients are selected on the basis of medical urgency, as well as compatibility.

Calcineurin Inhibitors and Your Kidney

Calcineurin inhibitors are common immunosuppressants medications prescribed to kidney transplant recipients. Cyclosporine (Neoral®) and Tacrolimus (Prograf®, FK506), both calcineurin inhibitor medications, lower the immune system to prevent your body from rejecting the transplanted kidney. The development of these medications has greatly decreased the amount of acute rejections seen in kidney transplants.

Side effects of Cyclosporine and Tacrolimus include high blood pressure, headache, infection and change in kidney function. Change in kidney function is related to drug toxicity. The monitoring of drug levels is very important to decrease the likelihood of kidney damage from these medications.

Signs of drug toxicity are sometimes present. They can include headache, swelling, weight gain, or change in urination patterns. If kidney damage is suspected, a kidney biopsy must be done to determine the cause. If a biopsy confirms that damage is due to calcineurin inhibitor therapy the...

Congratulations!

Congratulations to our new kidney transplant recipients! This quarter we have done eight successful transplants. We are pleased that everyone has done well. Keep up the good work!

William Woman of Cleveland, TN
Ramon Rogers of Pekinville, TN
Linda McBay of Cleveland, TN
Judith Newby of Cleveland, TN
Theresa Huddles of Chattanooga, TN
Timothy Blakes of Hickson, TN
Michael Mitchel of Ringgold, GA
Gene Campbell of Mineral Bluff, GA

An Erlenger Health System Newsletter for Kidney Transplant Recipients
Springtime Pollen

Springtime is in full bloom and so is allergy season. Flowers are blooming and trees are budding - making the pollen counts rise very quickly.

There are many ways to prevent or lessen the effects of seasonal allergies without medications. This is important because many allergy medications are not “kidney friendly” and may have adverse side effects such as worsening high blood pressure.

No one should have to spend the spring months indoors to avoid allergens. Here are a few tips that can lessen the common signs and symptoms.

• Wear a mask when mowing the lawn, pulling weeds, and planting flowers to avoid inhaling pollens and molds that may be stirred up.
• Do not leave doors or windows open when pollen counts are high.
• Stay inside on dry, windy days.
• Use the air conditioner inside the house and car. It helps to clean and cool the air.
• Use the dehumidifier indoors.
• Put the pets on the floor, not in the bed. Pollen can stick to fur.

• Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
• Plan outdoor activities in the late afternoon.

It is also helpful to be aware of the different allergy seasons in the Chattanooga region. Tree pollen season, for instance, is from March to May. The top pollen-producing trees are Oak, Birch, Maple, Hickory, Walnut, and Elm trees.

The grass pollen season is from April to November. Top pollen-producing grasses are Blue, Orchard, Red Top, and Bermuda.

This area’s weed pollen season begins in April and ends in October and includes Ragweed, Tumbleweed, Sagebrush, and Yellow Duck.

Your Kidney

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medication will be changed.

Both drugs must be taken exactly as prescribed. Make sure the drug is taken before or after meals at the same times each day. Food interactions may also add to drug toxicity occurrences. Grapefruit juice can increase drug levels, so it is best to avoid it altogether.

Some medications, such as certain antibiotics, will affect your body’s ability to use Cyclosporine or Tacrolimus effectively so always check with your transplant physician before starting any new medication, including any over-the-counter medicines or herbal supplements.

Donation

• continued

ity of body size and blood chemistry, and not race, sex, or creed.

• About 94.2 percent of kidney transplanted from cadavers are still functioning well at one year post surgery.

• The results are even better for kid-
neys transplanted from living donors. One year after surgery, 97.6 percent of these kidneys are still functioning well.

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