
For immediate release

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National initiative contributing to record organs transplanted Gift of Hope, Illinois hospitals engaged in 'best practice' project to increase donation

ELMHURST, Ill. (Nov. 23, 2004) – Four times so far this year, the nation has set new records for lifesaving organs transplanted in a month – marking the first significant growth in organ donation rates in years.

A national initiative among select organ procurement organizations (OPOs) and hospitals is being credited for a role in the climbing donation rates.

Through the Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative, select OPOs including Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network and designated collaborative hospitals are participating in rapid study and implementation of best practices to increase organ donation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the initiative last year in conjunction with the Boston-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI).

Gift of Hope teamed with Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn and University of Chicago Hospitals during the initiative's first phase. Advocate Christ has achieved among the highest organ and tissue donation rates in Illinois and northwest Indiana for years. The University of Chicago, meanwhile, recently was recognized as one of 23 collaborative hospitals across the nation that successfully achieved a 75 percent conversion rate, the rate at which potential donors actually become donors.

Gift of Hope has entered a second collaborative phase this fall continuing its team with Advocate Christ and teaming with two more hospitals, Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and Edward Hospital in Naperville.

"It's important to optimize every opportunity for organ donation because it doesn't present itself very often in any given hospital," said Alison Smith, Gift of Hope Vice President of Operations. Smith also serves as national collaborative liaison for the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations.

"Hospitals with the largest number of eligible donors typically encounter as few as 15, and at most 80, eligible donors in a year," Smith said. "Donation does not happen regularly enough for hospitals to foster finely tuned donation processes, which is why hospital/OPO collaboration is critical to ensuring successful outcomes."

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In addition to working with collaborative teams at Edward, Advocate Christ and Rush, Smith and Gift of Hope Communications Director David Bosch will oversee the “spread” of best practices to all 183 hospitals in Gift of Hope’s donation service area.

“ ‘Spread’ simply means that we share and implement best practices achieved during the first collaborative phase, so that successful referral and donation methods are applied at all hospitals,” Bosch said. “We are spreading the knowledge to increase donation.”

That knowledge involves effective communications between hospital and OPO staff during potential donation cases, early hospital identification and referral of potential donors and appropriate team approaches to ensuring the families of all eligible patients receive the option to consent to donation.

For more information about the collaborative, visit [**http://organdonation.iqsolutions.com**](http://organdonation.iqsolutions.com).

Gift of Hope is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Since its inception in 1986, Gift of Hope has coordinated donations that have saved the lives of more than 10,000 organ transplant recipients, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients.

For more information, about organ and tissue donation, call the Gift of Hope Education Hotline at 888/307-3668 or visit [**www.giftofhope.org**](http://www.giftofhope.org).

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