

February 7, 2007

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION IN ONTARIO

The McGuinty government and Trillium Gift of Life Network are working in a variety of ways to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Ontario.

Citizen's Panel for Increasing Organ Donation

Last November, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman created the Citizen's Panel for Increasing Organ Donation. The panel is holding public forums across the province to consult with the public on:

- Ways to increase awareness about the importance of organ donation for all Ontarians
- How to remove barriers to organ donation
- How the government can support and encourage more living organ donations
- The best ways for people to make their donation preference known, registered and recorded.

The panel has already held forums in 42 communities and is expected to submit its final report in March.

Trillium Gift of Life Network Initiatives

Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) is Ontario's operational service agency on organ and tissue donation. TGLN's major initiatives include:

Introduction and Implementation of Donation after Cardiac Death

Organ Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) has become an option in Ontario with nine successful cases resulting in saving 25 lives since its introduction. DCD has become an option for families of patients who have decided to withdraw life support after a physician has determined that there is no long-term prognosis for recovery and for those patients who do not meet the criteria for neurological death (brain dead). Improved medications and surgical techniques have dramatically improved the outcomes for recipients of DCD organs.

Expanded Implementation of Routine Notification and Request (RNR)

With the McGuinty government's proclamation of Part II.1 of the TGLN Act, TGLN and hospitals implemented the first phase of RNR on January 9, 2006. RNR is a key strategy to improve organ and tissue donation rates to save and enhance more lives in Ontario. This requires hospitals to report every death in the Emergency Department or Intensive Care Unit to TGLN. Reporting every death ensures that accurate identification can be made of a potential donor and that families are provided the opportunity to donate and fulfill their loved ones' wishes.

The first phase of RNR included 13 hospitals in 2006: Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Hamilton Health Sciences, Hospital for Sick Children, Hotel-Dieu Grace (Windsor), Kingston General Hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, The Ottawa Hospital, St. Michael’s Hospital, Sudbury Regional Hospital, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, Trillium Health Centre and University Health Network.

TGLN and hospitals recently implemented the second phase of RNR in January 2007 with the addition of eight more hospitals: The Scarborough Hospital (Grace Campus & General Campus), St. Mary’s General Hospital, Niagara Health System (Douglas Memorial Hospital, Greater Niagara General, Port Colborne General, St. Catharines General and Welland Hospital sites), Royal Victoria Hospital, York Central Hospital, Grand River Hospital, Lakeridge Health Corporation and William Osler Health Centre (Etobicoke General Hospital & Peel Memorial Hospital).

The first year of RNR resulted in a 153 per cent increase in the number of referrals made to TGLN from participating hospitals leading to a 93 per cent increase in the number of tissue donors and a 16 per cent increase in the number of organ donors.

Effective Requesting Training for TGLN In-Hospital Coordinators

TGLN in-hospital coordinators are receiving effective requesting training, a value-positive approach to consent for organ donation, to help improve Ontario’s donation rates. Coordinators are being trained to use important feedback received from donor families on why they chose to donate (i.e. to leave a legacy, to help others, to honor the generous nature of their loved one) and to recognize the individual of each person and family.

Best Practices from the United States’ “Breakthrough Collaborative”

The Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative is an initiative for increasing organ donor rates organized by the U.S. Department of Human and Health Services and the Institute for Health Care Improvement. TGLN is working with hospitals to adopt these evidence-based strategies that focus on performance improvement efforts and outcomes.

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Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister’s Office
416-327-4320

A.G. Klei
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Kari Cuss
Trillium Gift of Life Network
416-619-2300

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