

NEWS RELEASE

National program will improve the chances of a kidney transplant for hard-to-match patients in Ontario

Toronto, May 22, 2015—Today, Ontario joined Canadian Blood Services and provincial and territorial organ donation and transplant programs across Canada to mark a significant step forward in saving and improving the lives of those waiting for a kidney transplant. Ontario is proud to participate in the national Highly Sensitized Patient (HSP) program, which will expand the potential donor pool for patients who are harder to match because they have been exposed to foreign tissue through pregnancy, past transplants or blood transfusions.

Since Ontario joined the HSP program in May 2014, 57 Ontario HSP patients have been transplanted, 42 from donors originating within the province and 15 from donor kidneys imported from other provinces. Ontario has exported 21 kidneys to HSP patients in other provinces/territories.

“By joining our partners across Canada to expand the pool of potential donors for highly sensitized patients, who are hard to match, Ontario has increased access to kidney transplantation to this disadvantaged patient group,” said Ronnie Gavsie, President and CEO of Trillium Gift of Life Network, Ontario’s organ and tissue donation transplant agency.

The HSP program implementation was a gradual process that began in October 2013. Although it is still in its infant stage, the initiative has already yielded success stories. Since its establishment, the HSP program has facilitated 113 kidney transplants in Canada.

“I’m pleased that, with Ontario participating in this Canada-wide program, our provincial donation and transplant system will be able to provide improved access and outcomes for patients. I encourage all Ontarians to register as organ donors – a simple action that could save up to eight lives per donor,” said Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long Term Care.

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Quick Facts

- Today, there are more than 1600 people on the waiting list for a lifesaving organ transplant in Ontario, two thirds of those waiting are in need of a kidney.
- The HSP registry is for patients needing very specific matches from deceased kidney donors. Through HSP, this group of patients will have access to a national donor pool.
- Highly Sensitized Patients represent approximately 20 percent of provincial transplant waitlists, but receive less than 1 percent of the organs that become available.
- One in four Ontarians, 26 percent of the population, is a registered donor. To see the registration rate in your community, visit www.BeADonor.ca.
- Families report that organ and tissue donation is a source of comfort as they grieve the loss of their loved one. Donor registration gives families clear evidence of their loved one's donation wishes. Trillium Gift of Life Network has made it easy to register consent, either in person at a ServiceOntario centre or online in two minutes at www.BeADonor.ca
- Women are disproportionately highly sensitized due to antibodies developed during pregnancy.

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Trillium Gift of Life Network is a not-for-profit agency of the Government of Ontario responsible for managing organ and tissue donation for transplantation across Ontario and improving the system so that more lives can be saved.