

Media Release



For Immediate Release
June 1, 2010

LANDMARK NUMBER OF ORGAN DONORS AFTER CARDIAC DEATH IN ONTARIO *Ontario leads the nation with more than 100 donations after cardiac death*

Toronto, ON – Ontario is the nation’s leader in organ Donation After Cardiac Death (DCD). Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) announced the landmark achievement of more than 100 DCD cases performed in 22 hospitals in Ontario.

“As a direct result of 100 cases of DCD, 246 lives were saved through the transplantation of lungs, livers, kidneys and pancreases. As well, 63 per cent of the DCD cases also resulted in donated tissue including bones, eyes, heart valves and skin,” said Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. “DCD is a proven best practice to improve donation performance and has contributed to Ontario’s record success in saving lives. Without the collaboration and strong support of many hospitals and physicians, this improvement would not be possible.”

Historically transplantation of organs and tissue from deceased donors was first done after a person’s death had been determined by cardiac criteria – when their hearts had stopped beating. Later, determination of death for organ and tissue donation purposes was done according to strict neurological criteria (brain death). This became the only accepted determination of death before the first DCD case in Canada in the modern era was performed when Emile and Beth Therien made the decision to remove their daughter, Sarah Beth, from life support. The Therien family wanted to honour Sarah Beth’s wishes to be an organ donor.

"Sarah Beth's legacy as an organ and tissue donor and the wonderful memories we have of her will always sustain us during very difficult times. In death, Sarah Beth became a medical pioneer. For the first time in Canada, in the modern era, cardiac death, not brain death, was the criterion for allowing transplants. We are further consoled knowing that since that historic medical breakthrough at the Ottawa Hospital on June 17, 2006 many more lives have been saved. My family's experience as a donor family really speaks to the importance of the responsibility that health care systems have to honour families' requests, particularly with donation after cardiac death, as it serves the public good," said the Theriens.

DCD offers families the option of donation in cases where neurological criteria for death have not been met. DCD is carried out only after a prior and independent decision by the family and treating physician has been made to withdraw life-sustaining treatment. DCD

follows pronouncement of death, and is based on “irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory function.”

Today in Ontario, 17 per cent of deceased organ donations are a result of DCD, while brain death accounts for 83 per cent. Ontario ranks in the upper quartile for percent of DCD cases among the organ procurement organizations in the United States.

“DCD in Ontario has truly been a remarkable improvement. Lives have been saved through a better organized system. People in Ontario really value the gift of life, and now we are in a better position to help them give that gift,” said Dr. Andrew Baker, Chief of Critical Care at St. Michael’s Hospital.

DCD is an opportunity for families to support the wishes of their loved ones to save and enhance more lives at the end of life. TGLN encourages Ontarians to register their consent to donate organs and tissue and talk to their families about their wishes.

You can register your consent to donate your organs and tissue by visiting your local ServiceOntario Health Card Services – OHIP office or outreach centre where you renew your health card. You can also register by downloading and filling out a Gift of Life Consent Form from www.giftoflife.on.ca and mailing it to the address on the form.

For more information about Trillium Gift of Life Network, please visit www.giftoflife.on.ca. You can also call 416-363-4001 or toll free 1-800-263-2833.

-30-

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

CONTACT:

Bruce Kurta
Trillium Gift of Life Network
(o) 416-619-2350
(c) 416-526-8035
bkurta@giftoflife.on.ca