

Media Release



TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK CLARIFIES DONATION PROCESS IN ONTARIO REMINDS ONTARIANS THAT EVERYONE CAN BE AN ORGAN DONOR

January 9, 2008 – Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN), the province’s agency responsible for organ and tissue donation in Ontario moved to clarify who can donate organs in Ontario today.

“We don’t exclude anyone from being an organ donor, in fact we are very grateful when someone decides to donate because this is a decision that saves lives,” said TGLN’s Chief Medical Officer of Transplant, Dr. Jeff Zaltzman. “There are stringent rules and regulations to ensure the safety of the public, but we work as hard as we can within those rules to ensure that every organ donated can save lives.”

In Ontario everyone can be an organ donor.

“It is so important that this information is clear, that everyone can be a donor,” said Dr. Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. “There are over 1640 people waiting for an organ donation that can save their lives. Please, sign your card and talk to your family today.”

On December 7, 2007 regulations from Health Canada were brought into force as outlined in the June edition, Volume 141, No. 13 of the Canada Gazette Part 2. In those regulations section 22 section 1b) says that one must determine that the donor is unsuitable based on the criteria set out in the Canadian Standards Association document section 13.1.

Section 13.1 of the Canadian Standards Association guideline, labeled “Donor Screening” goes into depth about the evaluation performed to identify disease transmission and high-risk behaviour. This is consistent with International Practice.

“It’s important to know that these are guidelines – not the end of donation,” said Dr. Zaltzman. “The Health Canada regulations also lay out what is called an ‘exceptional distribution’ protocol. That means, that if/when someone wants to donate and they are labeled as someone who is by Health Canada standards, ‘high risk’, Trillium Gift of Life Network flags that organ and still offers it to transplant programs with the information attached. At that time the transplant program will decide whether to accept the organ for transplant.”

If the program does take the organ that is flagged, and the information about the benefits and potential risks of transplantation is disclosed to the intended patient, an informed decision can be undertaken.

“This is about life and death,” said Dr. Zaltzman, “We may have a potential recipient who is also ‘high risk’, so the benefits of transplant can far outweigh the potential risks. We may have a patient who is going to die without the transplant. It is the hospital’s role to weigh the risk and safety with all the information provided by TGLN, and we move forward from there.”

Note: All donors are screened for transmittable diseases prior to utilization of their organs regardless of their donor history.

For more details on Trillium Gift of Life Network or where you can obtain an organ donor card please visit our website at www.giftoflife.on.ca or call 416-363-4001 or toll free 1-800-263-2833.

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