

February 2024

UI HEALTH CARE ORGAN TRANSPLANT CENTER

Welcome, a little late, to a new year in the Organ Transplant Center. It has been my privilege to lead the University of Iowa Organ Transplant Center, a multi-disciplinary, cross-institutional center we formed soon after I first arrived 17 years ago, to better serve patients with end stage organ disease in Iowa and the surrounding regions. We accomplished this by putting you at the center of everything we do and bringing all the medical, support, and administrative resources together under one roof so you could come to one place for your care. The growth in referrals, evaluations, and transplants through the years have been a strong testament to its success. The addition of a robust program in hepatobiliary surgery (surgery of liver and bile ducts) the past few years has been a nice complement to our transplant programs.

New years are times for reflection, transitions, and looking ahead to what we might expect in the next 12 months.

Probably the most important change is welcoming a new leadership team to the health enterprise at the University of Iowa. A new Vice President for Medical Affairs and Hospital CEO will bring a new set of strategic initiatives to our institution, and we are excited to start working with them to see where the transplant center fits into their plans.

Our growth in referrals and evaluations over the years has been astronomic: from under 100 in the year I first arrived to nearly 1,000 in the past year! What a testament to our teams. Thank you and to your referring providers for your trust. You've already seen some changes for us to be able to manage this growth. Over the past few years, we started outreach clinics in the Des Moines and Quad Cities areas. With the help of our gifted informatics and information technology teams, we have converted these to telehealth visits. You can expect more reliance on telehealth visits in the future in all phases of your care. This will be a slow transition as we work out the processes, bugs, and right mix, but we have gotten great patient feedback. In addition, we are working with our operation excellence engineers to re-think the way we approach our evaluation processes. As more patients get referred, and the waiting list for transplant grows, we need to figure out ways to be more efficient with your time and cost effective with the testing we do. It's a work in progress and you will see the results of that work rolling out later this year.

Kudos to our kidney transplant team! We had a banner year for both adult and pediatric kidney transplants performing 120 kidney transplants in total at University of Iowa (and a few more at the Iowa City VA). Forty-six (38%) were from living donors, up from approximately 25% just a few years ago. I can't emphasize to you enough how important it is to find a living kidney donor if you are referred for a kidney transplant evaluation. Yes, it can be a tough ask, but a living donor kidney will work faster and last longer (on average) than any kidney you are likely to get off the list with the advantage of a much shorter waiting time.

We know that the one-time education you get during your evaluation, as thorough as we make it, can be forgotten during the sometimes long wait you can have for a transplant. Thanks to a generous philanthropic contribution from a patient family, we have created and posted seven short, videos meant to enhance and refresh your transplant education at any time. They are equally generously narrated by transplant recipient and television news anchor and political reporter Nick Weig from KGAN CBS2 Iowa in Cedar Rapids, and they are well worth the watch. They can be found on the transplant center website here: uihc.org/services/transplant-center. Keep your eyes peeled for four new videos on the website that will cover additional topics regarding important issues both before and after your transplant later this year.

Finally, on a sadder note, we must say goodbye to one of our long-term team members. Dr. Jody Jones, our clinical psychologist for the past 15 years, has taken a new position at University Hospital in Cleveland. I know she helped countless patients over the years, and she will be missed by them and the transplant center staff alike. Best wishes in your new position Dr. Jones.

We are excited to see what 2024 brings and look forward to taking care of you in the Organ Transplant Center as part of your team on your health care journey.

Alan Reed, MD, MBA, FACS
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Director, UI Organ Transplant Center
Adjunct Professor of Accounting, Henry B. Tippie College of Business
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Changing Lives.®

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section of our monthly newsletter will focus on support and resources offered both by the Organ Transplant Center and throughout the nation. Please utilize these as you need them and reach out with any questions!

Kidney Line: 319-356-1136

Liver Line: 319-356-1137

Medicare and Transplant

Medicare eligibility is based on age, disability, or ESRD. Kidney transplant is an exception to Medicare enrollment. All other organ transplants will need to have Medicare at time of transplant. There is a 1-year enrollment window for Medicare from date of transplant. Delaying enrollment can increase chances of higher out-of-pocket expenses for anti-rejection medication. Medicare Advantage plans cover anti-rejection medications, and out-of-pocket expenses are subject to plan.

* For further questions or coverage changes, please contact the Organ Transplant Center financial counselors.

Video Resources

The Organ Transplant Center has put together videos to better explain the transplant evaluation process and provide additional patient education. Please click the links below to access these videos.

- [Kidney Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Liver Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)
- [Pancreas Transplant - Patient Education Videos](#)

Organ Transplant Support Group

Starting in February 2024, the UI Organ Transplant Center will begin having our support group every other month. The support group will also be a hybrid version—both in-person and by Zoom. Each group will be focused on a specific topic, with speakers followed by time for discussion. If you have any questions, please contact 319-467-8385.

Location:

Iowa Donor Network
550 Madison Avenue
North Liberty, IA 52317

Date:

Thursday, February 8
Speaker – UIHC Dietitian

Save The Date: Our next support group will be on April 11. Meeting ID and passcode to come!

Zoom Information:

Meeting ID: 974 1496 3127
Passcode: 118836

Additional Resources

Social Security Disability

- [Adult Disability Starter Kit](#)
- [SSI Child Disability Starter Kit](#)

National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC):
[How to Apply](#)

Iowa Anatomical Gift Fund: [Application](#)