

Taking Care

UMMC sets up living-donor follow-up clinic

It's an *unexpected* match—country music and living donation. But the match definitely was *compatible* when, on Aug. 7, Nashville recording artists travelled to Falling Waters, W.V., and raised more than \$5,000 to support a new living-donor clinic in Baltimore.

More than 200 fans of country music and friends of the clinic—donors, their families and transplant professionals, including living-donor coordinators—supported the first-ever fund-raising event.

The University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) “living-donor follow-up clinic” was the vision of UMMC associate professor and transplant surgeon Matthew Cooper, M.D.

Dr. Cooper, a living-donor kidney transplant surgeon—and chair of the OPTN/UNOS living donor committee—was involved in the committee’s examination of living-donor follow-up at transplant centers across the country.

The results of the committee’s examinations revealed uneven follow-up, and he and the committee became aware of the need for enhanced long-term care of these magnanimous donors.

Dr. Cooper also saw that living-donor follow-up at his own transplant center could be improved, and he challenged the institution to make improvements.

UMMC and its Division of Transplantation agreed, and the medical center has supported establishment of the clinic all along the way.

“UMMC has a history of providing the highest quality of care for its living donors, both before and immediately after donation,” Dr. Cooper said.

“But we also recognized that living donors can benefit from longer-term support. In our attempt to meet this goal,” he explained, “we are establishing one of the first follow-up clinics *in the nation* to promote the lifelong physical and mental health and wellness of our living donors.”

‘POTENTIAL’ MEETS ‘ACTUAL’

The clinic officially opened its doors July 3 and already has seen more than 20 living donors.

“We hold our follow-up clinic at the same place where we have our evaluation clinic,” Dr. Cooper said, “which allows potential living donors and those who have already donated to interact.”

Potential donors can “see and speak to those who have been through the process,” he added, “and get a first-hand account from someone who’s already been down the road.”



TOP (FROM LEFT): Guitarist John Bohlinger and singer/fiddler Megan Mullins with living kidney donor Lee Adams, who organized the benefit and brought in the country stars. Also the members of Crossin Dixon—Jason Miller, Branden Hyde, Charlie Grantham, Michael Bole. Photo / Stefanie Girouard, UMMS Foundation.

BOTTOM: Event organizer and living kidney donor Lee Adams and Matthew Cooper, M.D., chair of the OPTN/UNOS living donor committee and the visionary behind the living donor follow-up clinic, at the official “check presenting” ceremony. Photo / Stefanie Girouard, UMMS Foundation.

Join the Collaborative Website and Listserv


Plan now to avail yourself of the resources, camaraderie and information-sharing available on the Breakthrough Collaborative website and listserv for the Transplant Growth and Management Collaborative (TGMC) and the Organ Donation and Transplantation Collaborative.

Joining the Collaborative website and listserv helps to ensure you have timely access to information on business, operations and clinical best practices in donation and transplantation.

Access is simple, registering takes only a few minutes and approval is usually granted within 48 hours.

After receiving your e-mail confirming that you have successfully registered on the website, you also may want to consider joining additional listservs, such as the one for improvement leaders or specific regions.

Note that the *healthdisparities.net* library is in the public domain and doesn't require users to register.

 To join the new-and-improved Breakthrough Collaborative website and listserv, visit healthdisparities.net (welcome > new user signup). After completing the first screen, make sure to continue onto the group membership page and select a specific group(s) to join, and then save changes.

You are added to the TGMC listserv with your registration. Note that you also can "un-join" the listserv(s) at any time, and then rejoin when you're ready.

SPECIAL NOTICE


INPUT SOUGHT FOR KIDNEY ALLOCATION CONCEPTS

The OPTN/UNOS kidney transplantation committee continues to review methods to improve national policy for allocation of deceased donor kidneys. As a part of this ongoing process, the committee is soliciting public input on concepts that may be used together in developing a future policy proposal.

Through its official **Request for Information**, the committee encourages anyone interested in kidney allocation to respond by Dec. 15 to a series of questions on the following concepts:

- Life Years from Transplant (LYFT)
- Donor Profile Index (DPI)
- Dialysis Time (DT)
- Solutions to limitations inherent in kidney allocation policy

Responses will be incorporated into additional public discussion, including a public forum tentatively scheduled for January. A summary of responses to the RFI will also be posted to the OPTN and UNOS websites.

 Visit optn.org/news/newsDetail.asp?id=1151 to provide your input on kidney allocation policy. Deadline for submission of comments is Dec. 15.

Donors come to UMMC from across the country to donate their healthy kidneys and part of their healthy livers to friends, family and co-workers. Living donation gives the recipient a better chance at long-term survival. And living donation also helps to alleviate the shortage of deceased donor organs.

When the donors arrive at UMMC, a multidisciplinary team of experts becomes involved at the earliest preoperative evaluation, and they remain involved throughout hospitalization and follow-up. The team's mission is to make the process as smooth and comfortable as possible for UMMC's living organ donors.

Depending on the organ donated, the living donor may stay in the hospital for recovery from two days to more than a week.

The costs of the transplant procedure—testing and evaluation, hospitalization and medical services—are typically covered either by the recipient's insurance or by Medicare.

THE CHALLENGE OF COSTS

Follow-up, though, is a different matter. Those costs *aren't* covered by the recipients' insurance plans, and transplant centers aren't reimbursed for them. The costs also are unlikely to be covered by the living-donors' insurance—if the living donor is fortunate enough to have health insurance.

In other words, living donors in the United States may find themselves on their own in paying for their follow-up care.


To say the least, it's a complex issue.


UMMC isn't letting those significant challenges, however, deter it from the mission of providing living donor follow-up care—and from assisting in better understanding the long-term health implications of being a living donor.

Toward that end, the Division of Transplantation has established a philanthropic fund through the UMMS Foundation dedicated to providing high-quality follow-up care and support through the living-donor follow-up clinic.

And now, to come full circle, enter Nashville.

At the first fund-raiser for the clinic, the gracious participation of Nashville's Megan Mullins and the members of Crossin Dixon—as well as autographed items contributed by other country music stars, including Faith Hill and Wynonna Judd—went directly to providing long-term follow-up care for living donors.

Sounds like the makings of a happy country song to me. 

 For more information about UMMC, visit umm.edu (*specialties > transplant services*). For information about UMMC's living-donor follow-up clinic, call Matthew Cooper, M.D., at (410) 328-7336 or send an e-mail to mcooper@smail.umaryland.edu. For more information on the Nashville artists who performed at the fund-raiser, visit meganmullins.com and crossindixon.com.