

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN'S TRANSPLANT SERVICES CENTER TO OVERSEE FORT WORTH LIONS ORGAN AND EYE BANK

DALLAS – April 5, 2000 – UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and the Lions Organ and Eye Bank District 2-E2 in Fort Worth recently formed an alliance to strengthen donor awareness and transplant availability.

Under a contractual operating agreement with the Fort Worth facility, the medical center's Transplant Services Center officially took over management March 6.

"This is a natural evolution, and how wonderful it is that we can work together to make something greater than the sum of its parts in the Metroplex," said Dr. H. Dwight Cavanagh, who helped bring about the alliance.

Cavanagh, who in October received the Paton Award from the Eye Bank Association of America, is vice chairman of ophthalmology at UT Southwestern.

Suzanne Henderson, acting president of Lions Organ and Eye Bank District 2-E2, said, "This alliance will provide improved service of procurement and placement of cornea tissue in the North Texas area."

Typically, UT Southwestern procures about 900 corneas a year, Cavanagh said. About 400 more could come from the Fort Worth Lions facility, which obtains them from several hospitals in Fort Worth, he said.

Ellen Heck, director of the Transplant Services Center, said that in addition to operating the eye bank program, the medical center also would work with the Lions to get the word out about donating.

"We will team with Lions and work to raise donor awareness," Heck said.

Outreach programs are planned with Fort Worth hospitals, doctors and the public, Henderson said.

Dr. James McCulley, chairman of ophthalmology at UT Southwestern and a native of Fort Worth, said he is pleased to see the two cities' eye banks working together.

(MORE)

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"The partnership is a natural one and will tremendously benefit all involved -- patients, corneal-transplant surgeons and the Lions organization," said McCulley, who helped bring about the alliance.

About four years ago, UT Southwestern's Transplant Services Center also partnered with the eye bank in Abilene.

"We're now covering Central and North Texas essentially, and the alliance will produce one of the best eye banks in the country," Cavanagh said.

The medical center began its transplant program 27 years ago, with a skin bank that served Parkland Memorial Hospital. In 1978, the District 2-X1 Lions Club contracted with the skin bank, becoming the first of three Lions districts that now are part of the Transplant Service Center. The Lions Club Eye Bank in Abilene was added in 1996.

The medical center's transplant program was one of the first three in the country to earn accreditation from the American Association of Tissue Banks and is the longest continually accredited eye bank in the state, Heck said.

"The university's transplant program is a community service that has for 27 years supplied tissue to all Metroplex hospitals," said Heck, who has been with the transplant program since its inception.

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