

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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April 15-21 is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week

HEART TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT HELPS SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT ORGAN, TISSUE DONATION

DALLAS – April 17, 2001 – Lawrence Schkade has looked death in the face and lived to tell about it. In fact, he's told many people about it.

In 1992 he received a new heart, one of 262 people who have received heart transplants through the UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas/St. Paul Heart and Lung Transplant Program since 1988, when the program began. Now at the age of 70, still healthy and thankful for the donor organ, he has made it his mission to encourage organ and tissue donation.

Seventeen people die every day in the United States waiting for an organ transplant. According to the United Network of Organ Sharing, more than 75,000 adults and children are on a waiting list for a transplant; 9,000 are waiting for either a heart or lung transplant.

"The more a person knows about what's involved in the entire organ-transplant procedure, the more they can participate in the management of their recovery and continued life," said Schkade, a professor of information systems and management sciences at UT Arlington.

In 1994 Schkade published a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "Impact of Medical Examiner/Coroner Practices on Organ Recovery in the United States." The article led to new legislation in Texas regarding the actions that medical examiners or coroners must take to avoid unnecessary denial of organs that are medically suitable for transplantation.

It is patients like Schkade that Dr. Clyde W. Yancy Jr., medical director of the UT Southwestern/St. Paul heart program, which has the best three-year survival rate in the United States, say are indispensable in raising awareness of the dire need for organ donors.

"Some 50 percent of transplant recipients are actively involved in awareness programs," Yancy said. "Some are involved with donor awareness and others with patient-support groups. This is a very gratifying group of patients to observe. They have a true appreciation for life."

Schkade calls it a "rebirth."

"You have to look death real close in the face," he said. "I have to be one of the most blessed people on the planet."

Three years after a second bypass surgery, Schkade began to think about a heart

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transplant. Over those three years, his heart's function had decreased to only a 12 percent capacity.

It wasn't until Schkade's youngest son, an internist, told him of the new medications called immunosuppressants, which aid in inhibiting organ rejection, that he decided to pursue a heart transplant. He successfully completed his evaluation and was put on the waiting list in November 1992. A month later, at the age of 62, he received a new heart.

The discovery of immunosuppressive drugs has led to an increased life expectancy for transplant recipients.

"The introduction of cyclosporine is probably the single most important event leading to improved outcomes after transplantations in the last 15 years," said Yancy, holder of the Carl H. Westcott Distinguished Chair in Medical Research and the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Cardiac Research.

Although medical advances have improved over the years for transplant recipients, there is still an acute shortage of organ and tissue donations.

The following is the United Network of Organ Sharing waiting list as of March 31, 2001.

Organ	Number of Registrations
Kidney	48,474
Liver	17,376
Pancreas	1,099
Pancreas Islet Cell	187
Kidney-Pancreas	2,471
Intestine	175
Heart	4,271
Heart-Lung	210
Lung	3,720
<i>Total</i>	<i>*75,614</i>

** Some patients are waiting for more than one organ; therefore, the total number of patients is less than the sum of patients waiting for each organ.*

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