

news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school ■ graduate school of biomedical sciences ■ school of allied health sciences

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******More kidneys will be available
for transplant through the new North
Texas Kidney Harvesting Network.*

DALLAS--Three hundred kidney patients in the North Texas area are waiting for donors to give them a new lease on life.

These are people who are waiting for kidneys to be made available to them for transplant from cadaver donations. Those patients will have an even better chance of obtaining kidneys now because of the recent organization of the new North Texas Kidney Harvesting Network, headed by Dr. Martin G. White. Dr. White is assistant professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern Medical School and chief of the renal dialysis unit and medical director of the transplant unit for the Dallas V.A. Hospital.

The Kidney Harvesting Network will be working closely with community hospitals where most traumatic injuries are treated and with personal physicians treating terminally ill patients, said Dr. White. In this manner, most families can learn about kidney donation as a way of giving to others.

"In many instances some of the family grief associated with an accidental death may be relieved by the opportunity for kidney donation. All of us involved in the kidney harvesting network and transplant team have a certain hesitancy when it comes to this because we're taking advantage of a tragic situation.

"But kidney donation is a giving situation. It makes death provide life for someone else," said Dr. White.

A potential source for donor kidneys is the community hospital. The personal physician or the family of the terminally ill patient may contact network officials giving the necessary consent for organ procurement after death.

first add kidney harvesting network

Recently physicians and hospital administrators from 13 Texas cities and towns, as well as Oklahoma City, Okla., attended an organizational meeting of the North Texas Kidney Harvesting Network. Texas was represented by delegates from Dallas, Ft. Worth, Amarillo, Lufkin, Waco, Temple, Odessa, El Paso, Wichita Falls, Texarkana, Lubbock, Abilene and Tyler.

Dr. White explained that the main goal of the network is "to increase the number of cadaver kidneys." He pointed out that eight million Americans are currently suffering from some type of kidney disease. Six hundred thousand die from these causes each year. Of this number 8,000 might have been saved by kidney transplant.

While the early kidney transplants were always done with kidneys from close relatives, improved procedures have enabled physicians to use kidneys from cadavers when chemical tests show a close matching of tissue types. Donor kidneys must be transplanted within a period of 36 hours. Within this time limit, the kidneys must be typed, a suitable donor found, the kidneys transported to the center (Parkland or Veterans' Administrative Hospital at Dallas) and the surgery performed.

If possible the donated kidneys are used in hospitals in the participating areas. If no suitable donors are found, the organs are transported to another center in the Midwest.

Arrangements for kidney donation in advance can be made by contacting the Dallas office of the Kidney Foundation of Texas if there is no local office in one's home city. The Dallas address is 1525 W. Mockingbird, Suite 310. (A.C. 214 638-7558). A donor card to be carried in a purse or billfold will be issued as proof that the carrier has given advance consent for kidney removal at the time of death.

According to Dr. White, any person under 65 years of age with good health and no history of kidney disease is eligible to be a donor. Also, he must not have cancer (except of the nervous system), systemic infection or be diabetic. Unless arrangements are made in advance, the hospitalized person whose kidneys are to be donated must be expected not to survive hospitalization.