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NEWS

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*****Only coordinated "bankable" organ transplantation program opens in Dallas.

DALLAS--The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas announces the opening of a coordinated program for "bankable" organs for transplantation--the only one of its kind operating in this country. ("Bankable" organs are those which can be stored for transplantation at a later time.) The program office will be on the fourth floor of the county Forensic Sciences Building, adjoining the health science center and its major teaching hospital.

"Coordination of transplant facilities is the wave of the future," says Dr. Charles R. Baxter, director of the UT/Lions Transplant facility. The opening of the UT facility with its coordinated program for bankable organs puts the Dallas banking program in the forefront of this important wedding of research and patient care.

This coordinated effort brings together not only the burn work at the school and Parkland Memorial Hospital and the Dallas eye-banking program, but other disciplines in the medical school. These include biochemistry, internal medicine, dermatology and pathology, in addition to the surgical areas.

Baxter, himself a professor of Surgery at UTHSCD, is also head of the Parkland Burn Center, one of only three nationally designated research centers of its type in the country. This year the surgeon was named recipient of the prestigious Harvey Stuart Allen Distinguished Service Award, given to the outstanding physician in burn work at the annual meeting of the American Burn Association.

"The establishment of this facility is based on the recognition by the County Commissioners, the Lions Club and the Dallas health science center of the need for full delivery of transplant services to our community and the surrounding region," says Baxter.

Besides the skin for transplantation in major burn injuries or those with other major wounds, bankable organs to be handled by the program will include corneas and tissue from the sclera, or white of the eye; joints for patients with certain bone and cartilage problems and transplantation of the iliac crest, a portion of the upper pelvic bone, which is often used for fusions. Research in some of these areas will take place in the facility's labs. In addition, long-range research plans for the program include investigations into the transplantation of islets, certain cells or portions of tissue in the pancreas for treatment of diabetes, and altering the antigenicity of cells, which, is hoped, would make semi-permanent skin grafts permanent.

Work has already begun in the offices and labs of the new facility, which opens officially Friday, August 14 with a reception for benefactors, health science center and hospital officials and representatives from city and county government from 3 to 6 p.m.

A reception for District 2-XI Lions Clubs will be held the following Sunday, (August 16) also from 3 to 6 p.m. The UT/Lions Transplant facility is an outgrowth of the cooperative effort between the UTHSCD skin bank and the Dallas Lions Tissue and Sight Foundation.

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The facility currently includes the following:

- * 3 liquid nitrogen freezers
- * 1 large 70° freezer
- * 1 control-rate refrigerator for storing corneas
- * 1 laminar flow patient isolator, used to clean bones and joints in bacteria-free environment
- * 1 preparation room with gas sterilizer
- * 1 eye bank lab
- * 1 skin bank lab
- * 1 computer room, including data bank which will hook up with the national eye bank network
- * 1 lab for tissue-identification studies
- * 1 research lab related to studies in graft acceptability
- * 1 research lab related to studies in graft application
- * 3 executive officers
- * 1 conference room

Baxter believes having the facility, which covers approximately 3,500 feet, or two-thirds of the floor, is necessary to coordinate these transplant efforts.

"For the first time transplant services will be located in one central area, leading to greater cooperation between medical areas, a higher rate of efficiency in operation and an opportunity for all areas of transplantation to expand this valuable work."

Working closely with Baxter will be faculty associate Ellen Heck and Dr. Charles Petty, professor of Forensic Science and Pathology and director of the Forensic Science Institute. Petty, who is acting as a consultant to the program, is also chief medical examiner for Dallas County.

Liaison with the Lions group and strong supporter of the transplant program is Howard Snyder, District Governor of Lions District X21. District X21 has taken the program as a major project.

The skin transplantation program at the Dallas health science center is the largest in the world in terms of patient volume and was the first with the capacity to supply other centers with needed skin in emergency situations.

Last year 187 skin donors from the Dallas area provided tissue for 268 grafts for area residents. Many of these patients received more than one graft. The bank was able to send tissue 38 times during the year to 22 hospitals throughout the U.S.

Over the years the Lions eye effort has been involved in the transplantation of many thousands of corneas and procedures with eye tissue. In 1981 the Dallas bank supplied 399 corneas/eyes, 362 through the county medical examiner and 30 from donations through Metroplex hospitals. Only seven transplants had to be flown into the Dallas area from other eye banks, while about 70 of the eye donations went to cities outside the Dallas/Fort Worth area to respond to emergency calls.

A new bone and joint transplant procedure done at the Dallas health science center is giving mobility to many persons who otherwise might never walk again. Dr. Marvin Meyers, professor in the Division of Orthopedic Surgery, is a pioneer in the bone transplant operation, which has an 85 percent success rate. Meyers, who performed 53 partial joint transplants before joining the health science center, has done 25 since he joined the UIHSCD faculty.

"Bringing bankable organs together in one facility is definitely the wave of the future," says Baxter.

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Note to media: Baxter will be available for interview and taping at 2 p.m. Friday, August 14, before the reception. Heck will be available at the same time Sunday, August 16, before the Lions' reception.

PHOTOS AND ART RENDERING OF TRANSPLANTATION MONTAGE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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