

## **The Leader: The Incomparable Gift**

by **Frederick E Roach**

Baylor University Medical Center has a long and active history in organ and tissue transplantation initiatives. We've always led in this significant medical field, with an increasing pace over the past 15 years.

In recent years, we've celebrated transplantation milestones frequently.

Transplantation definitely is a leadership issue for Baylor health Care System. Our medical staff, administrators and board of trustees wholeheartedly support this effort.

## **Need For Donors**

We recognize that a limiting factor in transplantation is a more effective donor program. We also know this is a solvable medical problem.

When reviewing the statistics, we note where the nation's 5,000 donors provided the means to transplant 19,000 organs this past year. By doubling the number of donors, we could wipe out the national transplant waiting list.

This requires aggressive initiatives. The number of donors has grown only 33 percent since 1988, while the number of those on the national waiting list for a transplant has grown 305 percent.

The "gap" sparked the need for aggressive new methods to encourage organ and tissue donation. We saw the tremendous success of the donation effort after the death of the great baseball star, Mickey Mantel. The challenge to "Join Mickey's Team ... Share Your Organs/Share Your Decision" was picked up around the entire country.

## **National Donor Sabbath**

We'll have another opportunity to encourage organ and tissue donation November 14-16. The U.S. Department of health and Human Services designated this time as "National Donor Sabbath" weekend.

Congregations of every faith will be encouraged to share the potential of "the gift of life" by making a commitment to not only "sign on" to be a donor, but to do even more. Individuals will be asked to inform our families of our commitment to be organ donors.

## **A Personal Experience**

I've seen first-hand the donor process. Just before I left for a vacation in Great Britain, a fellow church member asked me to visit a friend of hers. The friend was a bone marrow donor named John, who lived in Peebles, Scotland.

It seems John recently had donated marrow that was flown to Dallas and used in a successful operation at Baylor University Medical Center. The excitement and joy of John's family and the marrow recipient's family was contagious.

## **Giving the Best of Life**

Our various transplantation teams regularly experience this excitement! They give sight! They give renewed breath! They provide a strengthened heartbeat! They improve many of the body's functions! Ultimately, they provide continued life and a more meaningful

lifestyle to hundreds of needy people! This has to be an exciting aspect of health care for this select group of professionals.

## **Leadership Is Essential**

I was reviewing the book, "The Puzzle People: Memories Of A Transplant Surgeon," by Dr. Thomas E. Starzl. His connection to Baylor through our renowned former chief of medicine, John Fordtran, M.D., adds a personal note that has continued over several decades with fantastic personal and organizational results. Their relationship increased momentum in transplantation at Baylor, an area led by Goran Klintmalm, M.D., Ph.D.

The medical journey is exciting, and there are many victories. there will be more when the battle for increased organ and tissue donation is won. The first took leadership, as will the second!

This involves influence. Each of us can influence many people. The special weekend of the "National Donor Sabbath" is such an opportunity.

## **Baylor ... Leading Out**

Baylor University Medical Center's Organ Donor Task Force leads this effort. They are encouraging local pastors, priests and rabbis to emphasize to their congregations the importance of the need for organ donation.

We can support this effort within our own congregations. We can join the task force in providing leadership! Life is intended to be beautiful ... and full. Through our own personal efforts, we can help others enjoy the future.