Organ donation: The gift of life

Every day about 97,000 Americans are waiting for an organ transplant, according to the American Medical Association.

Every time an organ or tissue transplant is completed, a hero donor is behind the miracle, to improve or save as many as 50 lives, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Organ and tissue transplants aid those who have organ failure, are blind, or have severe burns or serious diseases.

Giving the gift of life through organ donation and transplant programs is heroic, but those gifts are still just statistics to most Americans.

However, when it involves you or someone you love, there’s a deeply personal meaning.

**Taking it personally**

On pages 4 and 5 of this issue, you’ll read the story of Javier Espinosa, a 24-year-old Dallas resident whose college graduation was suddenly overshadowed by the critical need for a liver transplant. An organ donor’s generosity provided Mr. Espinosa with the gift of life through transplant surgery at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

Now he is a passionate advocate for organ donation, combining his lifesaving transplant experience and filmmaking talent to help other transplant patients.

To become an organ donor, download a donor card from [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov). You should also declare yourself a donor on your driver’s license and tell your family, doctor, and lawyer that you are a donor.

Visit [www.methodisthealthsystem.org/transplant](http://www.methodisthealthsystem.org/transplant) to learn more about the transplant program at Methodist Health System.
Abygail Ellyson is a busy 35-year-old mother of three. “When I learned I had breast cancer, my surgeon suggested I do the genetic testing since cancer runs on both sides of my family,” says Ms. Ellyson. Genetic testing revealed she had a mutation of the BRCA1 gene. She decided to have both breasts removed, so she “would never have to worry about breast cancer again.”

For patients who have a history of breast, ovarian, or colorectal cancer, or have close family members with such a history, a genetic test can arm them with the information they need to understand their cancer risk and take the necessary steps to reduce it.

Ms. Ellyson says you must feel comfortable with whatever decision you make about genetic tests. She advises women to do their research beforehand and find a specialist with whom they

On the leading edge: Clinical trials for cancer patients

If you or a loved one is currently battling cancer, know that leading-edge radiation therapy technology and research are now available in your neighborhood at Methodist Dallas and Methodist Charlton Medical Centers.

Through a partnership with Texas Oncology, Methodist Health System is one of only 10 initial U.S. oncology practices and one of three locations in the Metroplex chosen to participate in several large national trials. The trials focus on lung, prostate, brain, head and neck, and gynecologic cancers (ovarian, cervical, uterine, and vaginal). They will give patients access to newer treatments not
feel comfortable. “I chose my oncologist, [Vasu Moparty, MD], after my surgery because I felt comfortable with him and his knowledge of the latest techniques for ongoing treatment,” says Ms. Ellyson. “I feel the decision I made was the right one for me.”

How it works

The genetic test is a simple blood test that tells you whether the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation runs in your family. BRCA1 mutations are often seen in patients with breast and ovarian cancer in the family. In addition, BRCA2 mutation carriers may have a family history of melanoma and pancreatic cancer. Colaris testing to check for genetic predisposition to colorectal cancers is also available.

Genetic testing with the BRACAnalysis test is offered to patients who have been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer at a young age or have a strong family history of breast and ovarian cancers.

Before the blood test, patients complete a hereditary cancer risk assessment form. If the assessment reveals the patient is at high risk of developing cancer, the patient meets with a physician to discuss testing and receives genetic counseling. Blood work can be done the same day and results returned in as little as two weeks.

Once the results are in, the physician helps the patient estimate her risk and develop a personalized cancer risk reduction plan. If the tests determine that the BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation runs in the family, the physician also discusses options to eliminate the cancer risk. These options include earlier and more sensitive screenings, chemoprevention, or surgery to prevent future cancers.

“This testing has been very beneficial for our patient population as it has increased awareness of the importance of regular screening colonoscopies and mammograms,” says Dr. Moparty, an independently practicing oncologist on the medical staff of Texas Oncology Methodist Cancer Centers who specializes in genetic testing.

“We have also been able to use the information gained from testing to help dictate patient care,” he adds. For women who test positive, this information can often assist them in making difficult decisions. In women who test negative, it provides them and their family some peace of mind knowing that they do not have a genetic predisposition.”

Knowledge is power

For more information about genetic testing at Methodist Dallas and Methodist Charlton Medical Centers, call 972-709-2580. Most health insurances cover the BRACAnalysis test. A physician referral is required for testing.

Are clinical trials safe?

All national clinical trials go through a rigorous multilevel medical review process to make sure they are safe and medically appropriate. Patients can feel confident because treatment plans in national clinical trials are reviewed by national medical experts in the field of oncology. The clinical trials allow for advanced care to be administered in each community.

A perfect fit

Radiation oncologist Keisha Harris-Henderson, MD, says that Methodist was chosen as one of the initial sites because of its reputation for excellence and because of its caring physicians and staff.

“Trials of this type are normally conducted through larger educational and academic facilities,” Dr. Henderson says. She adds that the decision was made this time to open up the trials to cancer centers in the community setting and expand opportunities to a greater cross-section of patients.

“Because of Methodist’s diverse population and large clinical base, we were a natural fit,” she says. “It’s a wonderful opportunity for our patients.”

The trials are coordinated by Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG), a national clinical cooperative group funded by the National Cancer Institute. Since 1968, RTOG has sought ways to increase the survival and improve the quality of life of patients diagnosed with cancer.

If you are interested in finding out more about the cancer clinical trials available at Methodist, call Dr. Henderson at 214-943-9911.

Ronald Jack with radiation oncologist Keisha Harris-Henderson, MD, an independently practicing physician on the medical staff at Methodist Dallas Cancer Center. Mr. Jack, who is participating in a clinical trial for prostate cancer treatment, says he decided to participate to help himself as well as others.
In January 2007, Javier Espinosa was living the life of a healthy, active college student at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas. He was looking forward to graduating and pursuing a career in film. Just one month later, on his 22nd birthday, Mr. Espinosa found himself in the emergency room of Methodist Dallas Medical Center, seriously ill and awaiting a liver transplant. Since that day he has become a passionate advocate for organ donation and has combined his lifesaving transplant experience and filmmaking talent to help other transplant patients.

The cross was a sign

It wasn’t the birthday celebration Mr. Espinosa had envisioned as he made his way to the campus clinic after suddenly becoming ill with what was first thought to be mononucleosis.

“After my condition kept getting worse and worse, we contacted a family friend who is an infectious disease specialist,” Mr. Espinosa says. “She advised me to get a blood test. That’s when we found out my bilirubin level was off the chart, a possible sign of liver disease.”

Mr. Espinosa was advised to go to a hospital immediately. “My mom was
A moving motion picture

Javier Espinosa is currently working on a documentary called Life Cycle. The feature-length film will chronicle his yearlong training for his next challenge: the 2009 World Transplant Games in Gold Coast, Australia.

In addition to documenting his training, both physical and mental, the film will highlight his transplant experience at Methodist Dallas and reveal the world of organ donation.

The film aims to reveal the hope of survivors and donors and the unique blessing of strangers whose generosity keeps others alive. A trailer of the upcoming documentary is available at www.pledgelife.org. Mr. Espinosa says that he hopes the documentary and Web site will raise awareness about organ donation.

in town for my birthday, so we hopped in the car and just started driving,” says Mr. Espinosa. “As we crossed the Trinity River, we saw the cross atop Methodist Dallas. We felt it was a sign. That’s where we stopped.”

Alejandro Mejia, MD, an independently practicing transplant surgeon on the medical staff at Methodist Health System and The Liver Institute at Methodist Dallas, broke the news to Mr. Espinosa that he needed a liver transplant. That was the last thing he remembered until he awoke from his transplant. His birthday was Feb. 6. He woke up on Feb. 12.

Life goes on

After a fast recovery, Mr. Espinosa went back to school and graduated three months later. Eight months after that, he started his own production company, Stream Switch Studio.

Then he went on to meet his next challenge. “I had learned about the annual U.S. Transplant Games sponsored by the National Kidney Foundation, and I decided to enter the cycling competition,” he says. “I didn’t think I had a chance. I was just trying not to get last place.”

The other cyclists had fancier bikes, but what propelled Mr. Espinosa were the memories of his transplant experience.

“The whole time I was racing, I just kept thinking of what I had been through that year—everyone and everything—and that’s what kept me going,” he says.

When the race was over, he had won first place and had a new direction for his life. “I knew I wanted to do something that involved filmmaking, but I didn’t know what until then,” says Mr. Espinosa. “Suddenly it all came together.”

Pieces of a dream

Since his liver transplant, Mr. Espinosa has produced videos for various fashion brands but has always felt he had to give back to the donor, donor family, and the transplant community that gave him everything. He started an organization called Pledge Life. Its Web site, www.pledgelife.org, will raise awareness of organ donation in the U.S. He has also created patient education videos to help transplant patients at the Transplant Institute at Methodist Dallas and The Liver Institute of Methodist Dallas.

“My goal is to promote organ donation and healthy living for people of all ages,” he says.

To learn more about the transplant program at Methodist Health System, visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org/transplant.

“As we crossed the Trinity River, we saw the cross atop Methodist Dallas. We felt it was a sign. That’s where we stopped.” — Javier Espinosa
When he arrived at Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital in October, 48-year-old Michael Hulshouser was a quadriplegic barely able to lift his head. He had been diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome, a disorder in which the body’s immune system attacks part of the nervous system. Symptoms can increase in intensity until certain muscles cannot be used at all. When it becomes severe, as in Mr. Hulshouser’s case, the person is almost totally paralyzed. No one yet knows why Guillain-Barré strikes some people and not others. The noncontagious syndrome is rare, afflicting about one person in 100,000.

Mr. Hulshouser’s problems began in January 2008 when he couldn’t walk far and became tired easily. In early March, his legs buckled under him one day, and he was hospitalized in a small town south of Dallas. After further attempts to diagnose and treat him at four other medical facilities in Dallas, Mr. Hulshouser still wasn’t regaining strength or progressing. By the time he was admitted to Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital in October, the 48-year-old father of two young teens could barely move a finger. Despite it all, he had a clear—although challenging—goal.

“My son said that all he wanted for Christmas was for me to be able to walk,” says Michael Hulshouser, who was almost completely paralyzed before coming to Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital. “Three weeks after Christmas and three days before my birthday, I was able to do that thanks to the Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital staff.”

Recovery has been challenging, although Hulshouser doesn’t remember all of it. His memories from March to July are spotty because the disease had surrounded his spine and worked its way into his brain. He wasn’t expected to survive. He says he felt like giving up and accepting his fate.

But his attitude shifted when he arrived at Methodist. “There’s something about this place. It changed me,” he says, adding that from the moment he entered Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital, he knew he was in the right place. He says the staff was wonderful to
Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital physical therapist Laurie Reichenbach contributed to rehabilitation patient Michael Hulshouser’s amazing recovery.

After being almost completely paralyzed by a rare disorder, Mr. Hulshouser is happy to be walking again.

Even now, Mr. Hulshouser challenges himself with leg lifts and other rehabilitation exercises to continue to regain his strength.

About Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital

The 40-bed Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital recently celebrated its first year of operation and offers specialized care to patients recovering from strokes; brain and spinal cord injuries; multi-trauma, neurological disorders, and complex orthopedic surgeries such as amputations, hip fractures, and joint replacements.

Amenities at the modern facility include a therapeutic pool, therapy gym with the latest in rehabilitative equipment, therapy courtyard, indoor and outdoor dining and recreational areas, and activities-of-daily-living training suites.

Patients are under the care of specialists who provide rehabilitative nursing care, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, respiratory therapy, nutritional counseling, and case management. This hospital is the only one of its kind in the southwest Dallas area.

For more information, visit www.methodist-rehab.com.

Texas law prohibits hospitals from practicing medicine. The physicians on the medical staff at Methodist Health System and at the Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital are independent practitioners who are not employees or agents of Methodist Health System or Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital. Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital is an independent, legal entity separate from Methodist Health System, Methodist Charlton Medical Center, Methodist Dallas Medical Center, Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, and Methodist Hospitals of Dallas.

Methodist Rehabilitation Hospital
3020 W. Wheatland Road, Dallas
972-708-8600
www.methodist-rehab.com
Experience the softer side of digital mammography at the Women’s Imaging Centers of Methodist Health System. Digital mammography images are produced electronically instead of on film, and the larger viewing area of the digital system makes it well-suited for patients of diverse shapes and sizes.

A soft, warm cushion is used during the mammogram to make the exam more comfortable. Methodist’s Women’s Imaging Centers are among only about 30 percent of breast imaging centers in the United States to offer this softer digital mammogram.

It’s faster and more accurate, too. Images can be generated within seconds and can be magnified and manipulated for optimum clarity. The images are then double-checked using the Imagechecker® enhanced breast-screening technology. Images are electronically stored on a secure network, making it easier for remote consultation among a patient’s health care specialists. Electronic storage also reduces the risk of misplaced or damaged films.

Methodist’s Women’s Imaging Centers have earned accreditation by the Texas Department of State Health Services in mammography and recognition by the American College of Radiology for achievement in high standards of practice.

To schedule your digital mammogram, call Methodist Charlton Medical Center at 214-947-5490, Methodist Dallas Medical Center at 214-947-2900, or Methodist Mansfield Medical Center at 682-622-7210.

It’s time for ‘Girl Talk’
Saturday, May 16
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Methodist Charlton Medical Center auditorium

Bring your sister, your mother, and your friends, and join us for “Girl Talk.” This women’s event will focus on answers to many of the health questions you may have been afraid to ask about menopause, minimally invasive hysterectomy, uterine fibroids, genetic testing, and incontinence.

Physicians on the medical staff at Methodist Health System will discuss the topics and be available to answer your questions. Enjoy learning and laughing, along with free bone density screenings, food, fun, and giveaways. Entertainment will be provided by New Arts Six, actress Karri Atchley from Menopause the Musical, and comedienne Debbie Bonick, who will emcee the program.

Space is limited for this FREE event; register by calling 214-947-0000 or visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org and click on “Classes and Events.”

The change of life doesn’t have to be a change for the worse. Find the lighter side at “Girl Talk.”
Minimally invasive hysterectomy

A path away from pain

As an 18-year veteran public school bus driver, Pamela Roberts knows her way around. So it wasn’t surprising she chose a direct path away from the pain of uterine fibroids.

From summer through last fall, she suffered abdominal pain and abnormal menstrual cycles. To make matters worse, she noticed that the pain and discomfort added to her stress and irritability at her already stressful job. An annual exam revealed that her symptoms were caused by uterine fibroids that had grown to a large size.

Uterine fibroids are common, noncancerous growths that can sometimes cause painful symptoms. According to the National Women’s Health Information Center (NWHIC), the growths may appear on the inside or outside wall of the uterus or, most often, within the wall itself. For women with painful symptoms, treatment options can range from medications to surgery, depending on the patient.

Ms. Roberts’ OB/GYN, Rochelle McKown, MD, recommended a laparoscopic hysterectomy—a minimally invasive procedure. In December, Ms. Roberts had the surgery and put her discomfort in the rearview mirror.

“It was marvelous and went really well. I was up the same day,” she says with a smile. “This procedure got me back up lots faster and with no complications. It was very positive.”

Familiar faces

Ms. Roberts is no stranger to Methodist Dallas. Her mom retired from the hospital after a 25-year career as a nurse. In addition to Dr. McKown, Ms. Roberts’ primary care physician is also on the medical staff at Methodist Dallas.

Dr. McKown says Ms. Roberts’ case is one of many situations in obstetrical and gynecological care where minimally invasive surgery can bring quick relief and recuperation. “Dr. McKown is excellent, and I had a really good outcome with her,” Ms. Roberts says.

“I encourage all women to get annual mammograms and checkups—that’s important,” Ms. Roberts stresses. “And if you have these kinds of problems, ask your doctor if the minimally invasive approach is right for you.”

Dr. McKown is an independently practicing OB/GYN on the medical staff at Methodist Dallas Medical System, and one of five physicians at Kessler Women’s Healthcare.

To find an OB/GYN on the Methodist medical staff, call 214-947-0000 or visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org and click on “Find A Physician.”

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Considering a hysterectomy?

Talk to your doctor about which procedure is right for you

Each year more than half a million U.S. women undergo a hysterectomy—a procedure to remove the uterus. That makes it one of the most common operations women have.

If you will be having the surgery, talk with your doctor about the different ways the operation can be done. Keep in mind that the reason for your surgery and other factors help determine which of these procedures may be right for you.

Abdominal hysterectomy is the most common technique. The uterus is removed through either a vertical or horizontal incision in the lower part of the abdomen.

Vaginal hysterectomy is done through the vagina. As a result, there are no abdominal cuts or scars, and recovery time is typically less than with an abdominal hysterectomy. In some cases, a viewing tube (laparoscope) is placed in the abdomen through small incisions. This scope is linked to a monitor to help the surgeon see the pelvic organs during the operation.

Laparoscopic hysterectomy also uses a laparoscope, and the uterus is removed in sections through small incisions in the abdomen. Less tissue is cut than in abdominal hysterectomy, and recovery time is shorter than with the other procedures.

Sources: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; National Women’s Health Information Center
Methodist Charlton receives high marks from HealthGrades—and new moms!

When HealthGrades® rated maternity care at hospitals across the country for 2007–2008, only one maternity center in Dallas received the highest (Five-Star) rating: the Maternity Center at Methodist Charlton Medical Center.

In the current 2008-2009 year, Methodist Charlton’s maternity center shares the honor with one other Dallas hospital, and they are an elite pair.

When asked how Methodist Charlton has maintained the top rating for two consecutive years, Mary Jo Walters, a clinical nurse supervisor on the postpartum unit, West Tower 2, says, “We just concentrate on providing the best care for our patients every day.”

How quality is determined

HealthGrades provides ratings of the nation’s 5,000 hospitals and 16,000 nursing homes, as well as profiles of the nation’s 650,000 physicians. The ratings (available at www.healthgrades.com) are used by consumers, employers, health plans, and hospitals to make health care decisions based on the quality of care. Maternity care ratings are based on four factors:

- Number of single-baby vaginal and C-section live-born deliveries
- Maternal complication rate among women undergoing single-baby, live-born vaginal or C-section deliveries
- Maternal complication rate among women undergoing “patient-choice” C-sections (those that are not medically necessary)
- Newborn mortality rate (divided into eight birth-weight categories).

A winning team

Because Methodist Charlton also ranked in the top 10 percent in the nation for maternity care, it also received the HealthGrades Specialty Excellence Award™. The Methodist maternity center consistently receives high patient satisfaction scores. Other factors that contribute to high-quality care include regular visits to patient rooms and a certified midwife who assists physicians. There’s also the career longevity of the staff, many of whom have been with Methodist and working in the maternity center for five years or more.

Just as the staff praises the physicians, the physicians are complimentary of the staff. Jorge Saldivar, MD, an independently practicing obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN) on the medical staff at Methodist Charlton, says: “I think the award is a reflection of the quality and the total dedication of the medical and nursing staff to our patients, our work, our mission, and our passion, which is quality patient care.”

Lisa King-Hatley, MD, also an independently practicing physician on the medical staff at Methodist Charlton, agrees: “The nurses are competent, patient, and compassionate. They pay a great deal of attention to the patients and their families. These are the things that patients remember when they leave the hospital.”

To find an obstetrician on the Methodist Charlton medical staff, visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org and click on “Find A Physician” or call 214-947-0000. To register for your baby’s birth at Methodist Charlton, call 214-947-7550.

To register for childbirth classes, call Methodist Charlton at 214-947-7260 or Methodist Dallas at 214-947-1160.

Texas law prohibits hospitals from practicing medicine. The physicians on the Methodist Health System medical staff are independent practitioners who are not employees or agents of Methodist Health System.

Vangie Baganya is one of the rising stars on West Tower 2 at Methodist Charlton.

Staff and physicians in the Maternity Center at Methodist Charlton Medical Center credit great teamwork for the unit achieving a five-star rating from HealthGrades.
Around the Dolezal home near Midlothian, a beloved 13-year-old black cat named Chaz has made room for two rambunctious little boys. After six years of trying to begin a family, Cindy and George Dolezal are now marking a decade of marriage with a house filled by two hearty, healthy, laughing sons.

Mrs. Dolezal, a full-time title company professional, delivered both her sons at Methodist Charlton Medical Center. Radek just marked his third birthday, and Roman just celebrated his first. She says she chose her physician, Jorge Saldivar, MD, an independently practicing physician on the medical staff of Methodist Charlton, for her own care long before the arrival of her two boys.

“He’s been my doctor and a family friend for years,” says Mrs. Dolezal. “Dr. Saldivar has the best bedside manner ever. There’s something about him that just makes you feel he’s part of your family.”

So Mrs. Dolezal turned to Dr. Saldivar when her first attempts at pregnancy resulted in miscarriage. He discovered that she had a health condition known as ANA (antinuclear antibodies), which can cause her body to fight against pregnancy as if it were an infection.

Thanks to an accurate diagnosis and expert care, she was able to treat the ANA, and her first son, Radek, was delivered naturally. Two years later, her second pregnancy also presented challenges. It is common for many moms over 35 to experience “high-risk” pregnancies. Mrs. Dolezal, 37, took appropriate precautions related to her pregnancy. Her physician and the Methodist Charlton medical staff led her through a safe delivery and Roman arrived via emergency c-section.

“When she came in for her first checkup two weeks after Roman was born, Cindy told us how grateful she was to everyone for the safe delivery,” says Dr. Saldivar. “She was very impressed by everything that was done by everyone at Methodist Charlton.”

In fact, it is that type of personalized care that has earned the staff and physicians at Methodist Charlton Medical Center recognition as a Five-Star Maternity Center for the second consecutive year. This places the hospital among an elite group of the top 5 percent in the nation, according to HealthGrades, an independent quality rating agency. Methodist Charlton also earned accolades for being among the top 10 percent of U.S. hospitals with the lowest rates of newborn mortality and complications during delivery.

“Everyone there has a smile on their face and a song in their heart,” says Mrs. Dolezal. “They make you feel like you’re the only patient they’re caring for, and that’s what makes you feel so special.”

To choose one of the family-friendly obstetricians on the Methodist medical staff for your next special delivery, call 214-947-0000 or visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org and click on “Find A Physician.”

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Resources

Pink Ribbon Tea Party
Saturday, May 9
2 to 4 p.m.
Methodist Dallas Medical Center
Hitt Auditorium
You’ll be “in the pink” for the seventh annual Pink Ribbon Tea Party presented by Senior Access to benefit the Methodist Cancer Center patients’ cap and hat fund.

Call 214-947-0017 to register or learn about teapot donations for the benefit auction.

Gain by losing
The Methodist Weight Management Institute offers life-changing programs and one-on-one help. Call 214-947-0004 or visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org/weightmgmt. Seminars will be held May 16 (Spanish-only at Dallas), June 13 (Mansfield), and July 18 (Dallas); Web-based seminars are available May 13 and 27, June 9, and July 14.