

UW Health: Transplant Center reaches incredible milestone: 12,000 kidneys transplanted

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MADISON, Wis. – The UW Health Transplant Center is one of the few transplant centers in the country that has transplanted more than 12,000 kidneys.

This milestone shows the center's incredible expertise and leadership in kidney transplantation according to Dr. Dixon Kaufman, medical director, UW Health Transplant Center, and professor of surgery, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

"When you think about the size of our program compared to some on the west coast or the east coast, it's especially impressive to say we are one of the first in the nation to reach this number of kidney transplants," he said. "It shows our level of excellence and teamwork."

The UW Health Kidney Transplant Program began with its first adult kidney transplant in 1966, performing its first pediatric kidney transplant a year later in 1967.

Patients receiving kidney transplants have ranged from less than a year old to more than 80 years old.

Over the years the Kidney Transplant Program has grown from just a few people to more than 50 physicians and surgeons, nutritionists, social workers, coordinators and others. They work closely with more than 100 care team members in the UW Organ and Tissue Donation team and the HLA laboratory, which provides histocompatibility testing to determine organ donor and recipient compatibility.

Almost one-third of kidney transplants have come from living donors, according to Kaufman. In fact, in 2015, UW Health patients were part of the longest living kidney donor “chain,” ever, according to Guinness World Records.

“We encourage everyone who is eligible to consider being a donor because it can save so many lives,” he said. “We especially hope people consider becoming a living kidney donor because patients who receive a kidney from a living donor have particularly good outcomes.”

Registering online as an organ, tissue and eye donor could mean you can become a donor hero upon your death and could save or improve another person’s quality of life, according to Kaufman.

“We recognize and honor the thousands of organ donors and their families who shared these gifts of life,” Kaufman said. “Their impact on our families, friends and communities is immeasurable.”

The UW Health Kidney Transplant Program includes six adult clinics in Madison, Rockford, Green Bay, Sparta, Waukesha and Marshfield. There are four pediatric clinics located in Madison, La Crosse, Green Bay and Oshkosh.

The 12,000th kidney transplant, which Kaufman performed, occurred in early November, and it is one of several recent milestones for the UW Health Transplant Center.

In September, UW Health surpassed 3,000 liver transplants, which is another incredible accomplishment, according to Kaufman.

The center also celebrated its 40th anniversary as a pancreas transplant program this year and opened the new [Pleasant T. Rowland Transplant Clinic](#) at University Hospital in September.

Celebrating a milestone is about looking back at what’s been accomplished, but Kaufman is already looking forward, he said.

“We are developing better ways to preserve and restore organs from deceased donors, we have a robust paired kidney donation program and research is helping us expand organ [availability](#) every year,” he said. “We are looking forward to our next 12,000 transplants and we are excited for what the future holds for our

patients and our Center.”

To learn more about living donation: www.uwhealth.org/living-donor

To register as an organ, tissue and eye donor: www.uwhealth.org/heroicdeed