



## **Federal government points to Clarian Transplant as a national model**

Clarian Transplant, perhaps the fastest-growing solid organ transplant program in the country, is capturing the attention of not only other health care institutions, but that of the federal government as well. Virtually unknown nationally in 2001, Clarian Transplant now has emerged as one of the five largest transplant centers in the nation.

### **SHARING INFORMATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS**

This growth, combined with outcomes that exceed national averages, prompted the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Division of Transplantation to visit Indianapolis in February to learn more about Clarian Transplant. HRSA identified Clarian Health's transplant program as one of 13 programs in the country to be emulated because of its best practices associated with high rates of organ acceptance and transplantation.

“We are excited that HRSA has recognized our center as a benchmark for other centers across the country,” says David Alvar, administrative director, Clarian Transplant. “This [learning initiative to share information with other transplant organizations] is a great program that HRSA has developed, and we believe that sharing information from top-performing transplant centers will raise the quality, awareness and success of organ transplantation for everyone.”

HRSA conducted many interviews and discussions with members of the transplant program, including Clarian administration, transplant surgeons and physicians, nurses, transplant coordinators, social workers and Finance department staff. On the final day of the four-day site visit, HRSA shared its findings with invited guests. The guests included representatives from other nationally recognized organ transplant centers, such as surgeons from the Mayo(Florida) Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic, experts from IOPO (Indiana Organ Procurement Organization) and UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing), and representatives from several other out-of-state procurement organizations.

During the meeting, HRSA representatives called special attention to the degree of teamwork they witnessed throughout the Clarian system. HRSA recognized Clarian's overall dedication to the transplant program and was especially impressed with the emphasis on quality measurement.

According to Jade Purdue, HRSA facilitator, “We have not seen another transplant program that has a dedicated quality measurement person. This is truly unique.” Shannon Dowell, RN, MSN, CCTN, clinical nurse specialist, is the person responsible for documenting Clarian's transplant quality measures. “Clarian has identified 800 quality

indicators to measure our quality as an organization. Of those 800, Transplant has 37,” says Dowell.

### **TEAMWORK AND DEDICATION MAKE IT HAPPEN**

The site visit gave Clarian an opportunity to share its clinical outcomes and services with peers, and provided an opportunity for visiting transplant professionals to share what they had learned during the visit. Charles Miller, MD, program and surgical director for Cleveland Clinic’s liver transplantation program, discussed the transplant and patient care techniques he learned from Joseph Tector, MD, surgical director of Clarian’s liver transplant program and chief medical officer for Clarian Transplant.

HRSA praised Clarian for its accelerated growth and clinical outcomes in organ transplant, particularly within the liver program. Tector discussed the importance of teamwork and dedication when building a successful transplant program.

“If you do not love transplant, then working here is not for you,” says Tector. “We have people working at this center that do not understand the word ‘no.’ No matter what you need – from pharmacy to nursing to patient education – everyone working in transplant finds a way to make it happen.”

### **TRUST IS ESSENTIAL**

Of special interest during the visit was Clarian’s approach to using donor organs that other centers typically do not consider, especially livers. For example, some centers refuse to consider a liver from an older donor, or disqualify the organ based solely on information provided by the center holding it. Clarian Transplant team members take a closer look, using a rigorous qualification process to evaluate the donation.

Clarian Transplant team members research each individual patient’s medical history to ensure the best clinical outcome for each organ recipient. That means Clarian surgeons may successfully transplant a liver passed over by another institution. “Each liver is different, and what may not work for patient ‘A,’ may work for patient ‘B,’” points out Tector.

Clarian Transplant sends experienced transplant surgeons to physically evaluate the suitability of a donated organ for a Clarian patient. Because some centers send inexperienced staff to evaluate and procure organs, “They may rule out the use of a liver prematurely,” explains Tector. Most of the livers procured for Clarian patients are evaluated by Martin Milgrom, MD, who has more than 20 years of transplant experience. “If he tells me we can use it, I know it will be good,” says Tector.

This type of trust extends to the operating room, where efficiency is critical, thus keeping the time it takes to perform a liver transplant to a minimum.

“Dr. Tector does not even have to speak when he is in the OR,” says Carrie Sanders, RN, OR transplant clinical specialty coordinator. “I make sure that he has each instrument he needs, in his hands, before his hand extends toward me, or whoever may be assisting him in the surgery. Not needing to keep asking for instruments allows him to concentrate 100 percent on the transplant.”

### **PATIENT SAFETY ALWAYS FIRST PRIORITY**

“The goal is always patient safety,” says Tector. “By being efficient in the OR, we decrease the amount of time the patient is on the operating table, decrease the amount of blood being used, decrease the time the patient is under anesthetic, and ultimately improve their recovery time and chance for a favorable outcome.”

**HRSA is expected to make a “Best Practices” presentation, which will include what it learned at Clarian, at the National Organ Donation and Transplantation Collaborative Meeting this month.**

— JAMES WIDE, STAFF WRITER for *The Clarian*