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The students of Spring Street Academy in Amherst embraced a fun activity to learn about organ and tissue donation. Over 500 green braided links were lovingly made by the sister of a lung transplant recipient as a way to give back to the community. The students used the green braids by linking together symbolically as "Links for Life".

Quality in Transplantation and Donation Public Forum

Transplantation and donation touch people and families in Atlantic Canada. Every year, leading into two days of health professional meetings, Transplant Atlantic hosts a public forum on organ and tissue donation. The forum provides an opportunity for people interested in organ and tissue donation to come together to hear stories about the program activities and successes. This year the forum title is "Quality in Transplantation

and Donation." Special guest speakers will address this topic, and donor and recipient stories will highlight the significance of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in people's everyday lives. All are invited to attend the event which will be held on October 12, 6:30 pm, at the Weather Watch meeting room, 5th floor Dickson Building, VG Site, 1276 South Park Street in Halifax.

Annapolis Valley Awareness Dinner

In the fall of 2010, Shelley Orr, District Resource Nurse for Annapolis Valley Health was approached by a donor mom about raising awareness of organ and tissue donation.

Jane and Gary Smith lost their son Brandon in a tragic car accident. Brandon gave a wonderful gift through donation, and it was a goal of Jane and her family to raise awareness of the benefits of organ and tissue donation. The question was, "What do the people of the Annapolis Valley need to do and know to become a donor?"

A group of volunteers organized an awareness dinner. The committee consisted of Jane Smith, Shelley Orr, Marg McClean, Lauren McClean, Shirley Landry and Bev Smith, along with the help of Dr. Adam Clarke, a champion and supporter of organ and tissue donation. The first annual awareness dinner was held on Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at the Waterville and District fire hall. There were approximately 100 people in attendance. Participants were made up of the public and healthcare providers. There were presentations from an organ recipient, donor mom, physician advocate, and the resource nurse. Regional Tissue Bank staff and Legacy of Life staff were in attendance to answer questions. "With everyone's hard work we successfully raised awareness about the *Gift of Life* through organ and tissue donation. Our hope is to make this an annual event!" said Shelley Orr. ■



Denise Peach-Stokes

District Resource Nurses

Denise Peach-Stokes has worked in the role of District Resource Nurse for South Shore Health since 2007. Denise has always had an interest in organ and tissue donation, so when this position became available, she looked at it as an exciting way to help spread her interest and provide education throughout the district. Denise works with staff at South Shore Health as well as community groups to

educate about donation and what it can mean to both the donor family and recipient.

This education has resulted in increased donation referrals for South Shore Health and Denise looks forward to continuing this work with the roll out of the new legislation and required referral program, scheduled to begin in 2012. ■

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

Offering a Legacy of Life: Meaningful Donation Experiences is a four-hour workshop to educate health professionals on speaking with families about organ and tissue donation. One suggested improvement based on evaluation was to make some of the presentations more interactive. Fran Calnan, administrative

support for Legacy of Life, and Janet Evans, Cape Breton resource nurse, took up the challenge and created a module entitled: *Who Wants to Leave a Legacy?* based on the concept of the popular *Who wants to be a millionaire?* The module will be rolled out for upcoming sessions. ■



Donation Awareness week, 2011. From left to right; Sherry Blinkborn, Palliative Care Volunteer, Dr Gerry Farrell, Director Palliative Medicine, Bonnie Mason RN and Angela Wilson LPN.

Health education schools survey

A survey of health education schools was conducted to learn more about education on organ and tissue donation in Nova Scotia. Five nursing/medical schools completed the survey. We learned that organ and tissue donation is a topic that is covered in most of the schools, however, the level of training is not consistent, and the priority placed on organ and tissue donation varies considerably. The Professional Education Working Group is planning to address the findings through developing core modules, providing more information on the Legacy of Life website, and following up with the schools to ensure they are aware of the resources available to help them with the curriculum. ■

Clinical Day 2011

“Overcoming the Barriers to Donation” is the focus for the third annual Organ and Tissue Donation Clinical Day in Cape Breton. The event will take place on November 10 at the Quality Inn, Sydney. Increased demand has led to the event accommodating 75 participants. Health professionals including medicine, nursing, nutrition, cancer care, pastoral care, social work, and management are among the participants. Topics will include personal stories from donor and recipient families, tissue retrieval and use in the OR, the new legislation and accreditation standards. There will also be an entertaining scenario-based role play by the Regional emergency group that have increased referral rates greatly over the past four years. This event is a platform for healthcare providers to learn more about organ and tissue donation with a variety of speakers on all aspects of donation from both clinical and personal perspectives. ■

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

One of the strategic directions of the Legacy of Life program has been to improve the organ and tissue donation process for donor families.

The Donor Family Working Group has provided the program with recommendations, one of which is to conduct a donor family experience survey so that we have first hand feedback from families.

The survey has been drafted and reviewed and will soon be ready to distribute to

families, beginning with organ donor families, twelve months after the donation has taken place.

We hope to learn about the perceptions of the information and support that families receive in an effort to identify areas for improvement. This project is being led by the Critical Care Organ Donation team at Capital Health.

Meaningful Donation Experiences Workshops have now been held across the province and the initial evaluation

of the program has been positive. With 189 participants the program has reached mainly nurses working on the front lines. The two to four hour workshops provide participants with the tools they need to approach families to discuss the topic of organ and tissue donation at end of life.

Three month follow up surveys indicate that participants have used the skills and found the workshop assists them in doing so. To learn more, talk with your local organ and tissue donation district resource nurse. ■

Canadian Blood Services is preparing for the launch of the Canadian Transplant Registry, an online business application which will include functionality for a **National Organ Waitlist (NOW)** and a **Highly Sensitized Patient (HSP)** listing for renal patients. The first phase of implementation (NOW) will include all non-renal patients across Canada who have end-stage organ failure and are waiting for transplants. Initially, only recipient data will be collected. The second phase of implementation (**HSP**), which will launch shortly after, will list the hardest to match kidney patients, for whom kidneys are difficult to find as a result of patients having developed HLA antibodies through previous pregnancies, transplants or blood transfusions. Along with the addition of donor data, the second phase of the implementation will include HSP kidney matching and enhanced functionality for donor coordinators to virtually cross-match their donor organs to non-renal recipients. This is seen as a major benefit to the heart, lung, pancreas, small bowel, and islet programs who are all concerned about sensitization in their patients.



Canadian Blood Services is currently working with Transplant Programs, Organ Procurement Organizations and HLA laboratories to complete activities in preparation for the launch of the Canadian Transplant Registry. Demonstration sessions have been conducted with front line users and supervisors from across the country with positive feedback. An implementation date will be set once all provinces are ready to participate. For more information on NOW and HSP visit the Canadian Blood Services website:

www.blood.ca/organsandtissues.



Donor Family – Jane Smith

Our sons were involved in a car accident. Our eldest, Jared, being critical with a major head injury, and Brandon dying instantly. I remember being told that one child had died and the other one was fighting for his life.

I remember trying to process and understand what the medical staff were trying to tell me. Then the thought came very clearly to me. Brandon had signed his health card as a donor. I remember talking with one of the emergency room doctors and stressing something had to be done immediately to make Brandon's wish to be a donor successful. Two important tasks were now at hand, to save Jared's life and to give back from Brandon's life.

It was an overwhelming feeling of comfort and strength that I felt when the staff notified us that Brandon would be a

candidate to be a donor. This thought is what sustained me through the ensuing months of my grief for Brandon. I know he would have smiled that irresistible smile knowing that he could help someone else continue their journey here on earth.

It is my hope that we can spread the word through our experiences by educating others before tragedy hits, so that people can prepare to make an informed decision and be ready to act upon the need when it arises. I also hope that we can make it an easier, more efficient and safer process for all involved in the gift of life.

Knowing that Brandon has helped others keeps that eternal hug around my heart that gives me the strength to continue on with my life, void of his effervescent physical presence. For this I am truly thankful. ■

Why do the numbers matter?

By Danielle Byrne RN MN

Over the last three years, charts audits have been conducted with the purpose of identifying Nova Scotia's potential for organ and tissue donation. For every missed referral, there is potential for missing an opportunity for donation.

Chart audits are time consuming. However, they have provided a wealth of information on where our system can improve. The numbers provide evidence to support where the program needs to focus education to improve referral rates. As well, the data results emphasize the reason to change provincial legislation and therefore healthcare practice. ■

There is a well documented gap between the number of organ and tissue donors and the need for organs and tissues for transplantation. Nationally and provincially efforts have been underway to improve the identification and referral of organ and tissue donors. The following table provides stats for Nova Scotia.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (to Aug. 30)
Number of organ donor referrals	40	44	57	59	28
Number of actual organ donors	15	16	15	19	12
Number of tissue donation referrals	158	196	198	309	286
Number of actual tissue donors	100	100	95	98	99

Kudos to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Emergency Department, who have recognized and referred every potential patient for organ and or tissue donation in the first six months of 2011. In 2010 there were 16 referrals resulting in 6 actual donors. To date in 2011 there have been 15 referrals and 7 actual donors. "We are very proud of this accomplishment, related to offering organ and tissue donation as an end of life care option," stated unit manager Barb O'Neil. ■



DID You Know?

Make the CALL to GIVE

By Danielle Byrne RN MN

There are 144 Nova Scotians waiting for a heart, liver, kidney or kidney/pancreas transplant. Sadly, some people will die because there are not enough donated organs. The soon to be proclaimed *Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act*¹ mandates the action to refer for organ or tissue donation. As a Registered Nurse, I think we have the education to explore and advocate for a person's wishes. We do this every day with the care we provide. We can use our skills

of communication and collaboration when approaching a person and or family to explore their thoughts about organ and tissue donation. The healthcard provides information on a person's wish to be a donor and this can open the door for a discussion. We have an obligation to provide high quality end of life care which includes offering the option of donation to the terminally ill as a way to leave a legacy. Making the screening call to the Organ Donor Coordinator or Tissue Bank Specialist assists in identifying when the option is

appropriate to offer. RNs are in a unique position to positively affect the organ and tissue waiting lists within Nova Scotia. All it takes is to make one CALL when a person dies to GIVE forty people a new lease on life.

¹The Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act passed third and final reading in December 2010. Proclamation is pending implementation plan for provincial policy development and professional education. ■

Life: Pass It On – raising awareness 60 watts at a time

So many lives are changed for the better as a result of organ donation – but how can we raise the awareness in our community? This was the challenge that the *Life: Pass It On Transplant Society* took on during the Canadian National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week (NOTDAW) this past April. In the end they came up with a novel method of shining a little light on the subject. Keeping with the theme of green as the colour of organ and tissue donation awareness, they launched a grassroots campaign where individuals were

encouraged to install green bulbs in their porch lights during the Awareness Week in April. They received a lot of media coverage of the campaign during the week, including a CBC radio interview with society directors Denice Klavano, mother of donor Brad Howell, and double-lung recipient Trevor Umlah. Earlier in the week Denice presented local television personality Cyril Lunney with his own green bulb, on-air, during a segment of Breakfast Television. Overall the initial Green Porch Light Project was a great success, highlighted

by the provincial legislature installing green bulbs in their exterior lights. With the support of Nova Scotia Power and the local Home Depot, *Life: Pass It On* was able to distribute over 500 energy-efficient green bulbs during the week, and green porch lights were seen throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality. They intend to make it an annual event, so make sure to “go green” in 2012! For more information on *Life: Pass it On* check out the website: www.lifepassiton.ca. ■

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