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ORGAN DONATION ALSO OFFERS SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES More than \$100,000,000 in savings generated by kidney transplants in Québec

Montreal, February 17, 2015 - Québec's health care system has used a good performance in the area of organ donation to generate **savings of over \$100 million** in the past decade solely through kidney transplants, Transplant Québec revealed today. Much more could be done, however.

More importantly, 4,000 **people** reaped the benefit of a transplant, thanks to the generosity of 1,385 deceased donors. These organ donations saved the lives of more than 1,785 people, and they allowed some 2,700¹ others to recover their health through a kidney transplant. "This treatment not only finances itself, but it's the best treatment option," said Louis Beaulieu, CEO of Transplant Québec. The effects of a transplant recipient's return to health are invaluable:

- On a human level, for the person, whose quality of life is greatly improved, usually after years of exhausting dialysis treatments, and for his or her loved ones;
- On a financial level, with substantial savings of **more than \$100 million** generated by kidney transplants during the reference decade. In addition, with one in two transplant recipients returning to the job market², there are significant dividends for society.

Organ Donation and Kidney Transplantation: A Net Benefit to Patients and Society

For the vast majority of people with end-stage renal disease, hemodialysis is administered in hospital at least three times a week, at an annual cost of \$60,000 to \$80,000 per patient. In comparison, the savings generated by a kidney transplant range from \$40,000 to \$53,000 per year depending upon whether the costs of anti-rejection medication and medical follow-up are included.²

"In other words, every time two kidney transplants are successfully performed, the savings generated are equivalent to the annual cost of dialysis treatments administered to a single patient, that's to say between \$80,000 and \$106,000. These figures tell us that organ donation not only saves lives, but it also pays off in the form of substantial savings, which allows the health care system to improve care dispensed to other patients. As former president and CEO of INESSS, Dr. Juan Roberto Iglesias³, mentioned, kidney transplantation – which improves the chances of survival and the quality of life of a person with kidney failure – is recognized worldwide as the most cost-effective treatment," explained Louis Beaulieu.

With more donors meeting the medical and legal criteria for organ donation, there is a higher probability of finding a compatible donor more quickly and thus reducing hospitalization time and the risk of death. What's more, a transplantation performed in a more timely fashion not only saves lives, but it speeds up the return to health and reduces the significant costs associated with more lengthy hospitalizations — which people waiting for a vital organ such as a heart, lungs or a liver are often forced to endure.

Highlights

- **75% of persons on the Transplant Québec's waiting list are in need of a kidney.** Of the 1,073 people waiting for a transplant (compared to 1,047 in 2013) on December 31, 2014, 792 were waiting for a new kidney (compared to 782 in 2013).

¹ Some 485 kidneys were retrieved from living donors, according to numbers from transplant centers.

² *Étude sur l'économie de l'insuffisance rénale*, Yves Rabeau, Ph.D., on behalf of the Kidney Foundation of Canada – Québec Branch, November 2012.

³ *Analyse d'impact budgétaire d'une augmentation de la transplantation rénale au Québec*, Rapport de l'Institut national d'excellence en santé et services sociaux, December 2012

- **Wait times for kidneys have also decreased significantly**, going from an average of 1,175 days in 2013 to 775 days in 2014. This decrease may be attributed to the fact that a considerable number of people who were on the waiting list for several years finally received a transplant following the implementation of the new algorithm for the allocation of kidneys in 2012. Thus, people who had been waiting for more than 10 years were able to receive a transplant.
- **Organ donors are a rare breed.** Nothing is a given when it comes to organ donation. If all the conditions were met each time organ donation is possible, there would be a maximum of slightly more than 300 donors per year, according to estimates from the Collège des médecins du Québec. This figure is equivalent to one potential donor per 100 hospital deaths. This percentage figure is recognized internationally.

“In the end, the person whose life is saved more quickly suffers less, and the cost to the health care system is lower. Investing in organ donation is both beneficial and cost-effective. And our society as a whole wins,” said Louis Beaulieu.

Quote from Jean Gravel, Heart Transplant Recipient

“From one day to the next I was diagnosed with end-stage heart failure due to a virus that had lodged itself in my heart. I was placed on the Transplant Québec waiting list for a new heart. My heart deteriorated almost instantaneously, and my situation was quickly deemed critical. Transplantation was of the utmost urgency. Only 37 at the time and in very good health, I was the father of three girls and I led an active professional life, when suddenly I found myself hooked up to a mechanical heart, waiting for that precious transplant. I was finally saved *in extremis* by a generous donor and family. In the 13 years since my transplant, I’ve recovered my health, I’m living life to the fullest, and through my business development work I’m making an active contribution to Québec’s economy. My name is Jean Gravel. I’m the vice-president of sales and marketing at Héroux-Devtek, and I also serve as vice-president of Transplant Québec’s board of directors.”

[See the appendix for the technical sheet](#) (French only)

The report on Transplant Québec’s activities in 2014 is available at
www.transplantquebec.ca/en/press-releases

About Transplant Québec

Transplant Québec has a mandate from the Minister of Health and Social Services to save lives and improve the health of persons in need of a transplant by coordinating the organ donation process, ensuring the equitable allocation of organs, supporting best clinical practices through consensus-building and the mobilization of its partners, and promoting organ donation in the society at large. Transplant Québec therefore works to ensure that the greatest possible number of Quebecers waiting for an organ can benefit from a transplant in as timely a fashion as practicable.

Complementary data – organ donation in Quebec at <http://www.transplantquebec.ca/en/press-releases>

Source :

Brigitte Junius
Transplant Québec
514 286-1414, ext. 216 / 514 349-0752

Information :

Diane Jeannotte
514 284-2860, ext. 2 / 514 772-8019