

# ‘Doctors for Organ Donation’

NEW PROGRAM ENCOURAGES PRIMARY-CARE PHYSICIANS TO DISCUSS DONATION WITH THEIR PATIENTS

Among the many initiatives to promote donation during National Donate Life Month is a new national effort to create a “donation-friendly America.” More specifically, a program to promote donation through primary-care physician offices is being launched with a pilot test in Texas.

The program is sponsored by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in collaboration with the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), administered by UNOS.

“Studies show that a large percentage of Americans want to learn about organ donation through their primary care physicians, whom they consider a trusted source of information,” said James F. Burdick, M.D., director of HRSA’s Division of Transplantation. “Because of the success of a similar effort conducted by the Texas Medical Association, Texas enjoys an ideal position to lead the way in this important new effort,” he added.

Several years ago, the Texas Medical Association (TMA), under the leadership of former TMA president Phil Berry, M.D., sponsored “Live & Then Give,” a program that also promoted donation through primary-care physician offices.

Dr. Berry, a liver transplant recipient himself, generously agreed to help champion the new program, first in Texas and subsequently throughout the nation.

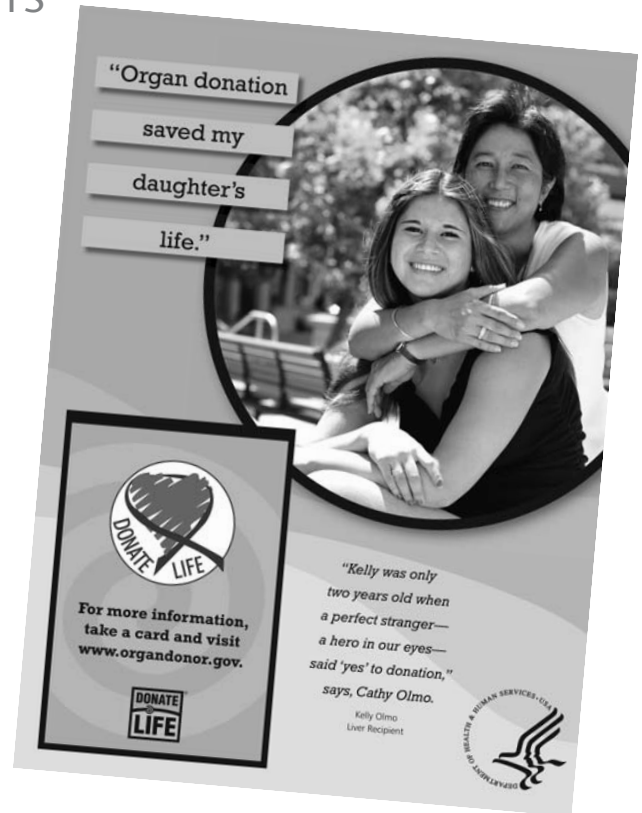
The program, “Doctors for Organ Donation,” is supported by a strong team of national, state and local organizations: HRSA and the OPTN through UNOS; TMA and the Texas Transplantation Society; and Southwest Transplant Alliance, the OPO that serves the two pilot counties, Dallas and El Paso.

## Providing the tools, facilitating discussion

The program was introduced in late April at the TMA’s TexMed 2007 meeting in Dallas, where attendees were able to preview materials and sign up to participate as the program rolls out in their areas.

Letters introducing the program and requesting support and participation were mailed to local medical associations. HRSA has produced information kits in English and Spanish for pilot testing by primary care physicians in Dallas and El Paso. Volunteers of Southwest Transplant Alliance will serve as local contacts for the pilot test, which is expected to last a few months.

The initial goal is to encourage a positive patient-doctor dialogue about donation, followed by a greater willingness of the general public to sign up as organ donors.



The “Doctors for Organ Donation” materials are available in both English and Spanish.

“This approach holds great promise,” said Dr. Berry. “Increasingly, patients and their doctors are discussing end-of-life issues, such as living wills. Organ donation, or what we’re calling ‘gift of life discussions,’ should be a component of those discussions.

“What we’re trying to do with this initiative,” he added, “is give doctors the tools they need to facilitate discussion and further educate their patients.”

Southwest Transplant Alliance’s cadre of trained and highly motivated volunteers will serve as ambassadors of the program and help personalize the initiative.

“After all,” said Pam Silvestri, director of public affairs for Southwest Transplant Alliance, “what better testimonial to donation and transplantation than those who have been personally touched by the experience?” **U**

**ONLINE** For more information on “Doctors for Organ Donation,” send an e-mail to Nancy Carothers, public health analyst at HRSA’s Division of Transplantation, [ncarothers@hrsa.gov](mailto:ncarothers@hrsa.gov), or to Elisabeth Gabrynowicz, director of external affairs at UNOS, [gabrynej@unos.org](mailto:gabrynej@unos.org).