

# The Road to Receiving a Transplant

FMQAI: The Florida ESRD Network has a goal to ensure access to transplantation for every individual who may be eligible for such a procedure. The following information can help ESRD patients understand what to expect in pursuing a transplant:

- Kidney transplantation requires teamwork and communication throughout the process, from initial referral to long term care of the transplanted kidney. The nephrologist, patient, dialysis social worker, dietitian and charge nurse all should work together to provide optimal quality of life for the ESRD patient.
- Individuals considered candidates for transplantation may be referred by their nephrologist, dialysis unit or by self-referral.
- Once the referral is made, the transplant center will require completion of an application and consent for release of medical records. After the medical records are collected, the center will proceed by interviewing the patient and referring for various medical tests.
- The dialysis social worker or another assigned dialysis staff member can assist patients with the process as needed, and coordinate the process with the transplant coordinator and/or transplant social worker.
- Each transplant center has guidelines for selection of appropriate candidates. Though each case is evaluated individually, transplant centers assess for the following: cancer, heart disease, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, other chronic diseases, the patient's weight, and level of compliance with medication or therapy.
- Patient evaluation from time-to-time will result in the discovery of a medical or surgical condition, which requires correction prior to elective transplant procedure. The transplant center will consult with the patient and the nephrologist on how to intervene.
- Once the patient is accepted as a transplant candidate, histocompatibility tests will be performed by the transplant center. These are blood tests that determine a person's major histocompatibility antigens; also known as HLA typing or tissue typing. Family members and others available for living donor consideration will also have histocompatibility testing performed.
- Dialysis facilities can, as part of their treatment planning, assist kidney transplant candidates with factors that might affect their eligibility for transplant. These might include addressing severe obesity, reinforcing adherence to prescribed

medication or therapy, and addressing social, emotional, or financial factors related to ability to function after transplant.

- Once you are approved for transplant, you will be notified in writing that you are on the active list.
- There is a national shortage of cadaver organs. In spite of increased efforts at organ retrieval and expanding acceptance guidelines, the number of patients waiting for a cadaver kidney continues to grow. Living related kidneys and living emotionally related kidneys both last longer than cadaver kidneys, creating a significant benefit for the recipient without impairment to the donor. Therefore, transplant centers will make an effort to try and identify a suitable living donor for each recipient.
- United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) has information and pamphlets about organ donation and transplant, transplant waiting lists and statistical information. UNOS toll free phone number is 1-888-894-6361 or visit their website at [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org).
- The Coalition on Donation provides information on how to become an organ and tissue donor. Call 1-804-782-4920 or log on to [www.shareyourlife.org](http://www.shareyourlife.org).