

## **Living Well With Transplants Patient Education Day**

June 20, 2008

Is gratitude an element of a person's "psychological immune system" that converts adversity into a positive attitude and happiness?

Perhaps. But there's no doubt a grateful attitude is an effective coping mechanism that helps a person turn tragedy into an opportunity for healing and growth.

Dr. Philip Watkins, an acknowledged American pioneer in the study of gratitude as a science, took a positive view of this topic in his presentation to about 120 organ recipients, people awaiting transplants and caregivers attending the Living Well With Transplants Second Annual Patient Education Day at Lister Hall on June 20. The conference was presented by the International Transplant Nurses Society Alberta Branch and the GoodHearts Mentoring Foundation, a support group for recipients, people waiting for organs and their caregivers.

Watkins has been conducting research on gratitude since 1995. The Spokane, Wash., psychologist's insightful research has contributed to a greater understanding of the strong relationship between gratitude and happiness. A list of readings and references used in his talk is posted on the GoodHearts website.

In addition to gratitude, the day-long conference examined several other topics that change and bolster organ recipients' lives.

Dr. Glen Pearson, co-director of the Cardiac Transplant Clinic at the University of Alberta Hospital, is a specialist on the drugs used by heart recipients. His presentation on Medication Use: Truth, Lies and Common Sense, reflected his years of observations as a pharmacologist and his practice-based biomedical research.

Dr. Mark Haykowsky, of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta, and clinical dietician Grace Hubert, both of whom are associated with Western Canada's most prestigious transplant programs, discussed the roles exercise and diet play in improving and extending the lives of organ recipients.

Two members of the Transplant Foundation Inc. executive closed the conference with a presentation on mentoring and enhancing lives with "another perfect match."

Eli Compton, the founder of the mentor program used by foundation, is the executive director of the Miami, Fla., organization.

Dr. Patricia Scott is a transplant educator, researcher and advocate. The two-time liver recipient is also associate professor of occupational therapy at Indiana University, Purdue University in Indianapolis, where she maintains a research program to to better understand

participation recovery patterns following transplantation.

Scott has spoken at U.S. and international conferences to audiences of professionals as well as organ recipients. The former member of the Transplant Foundation board returns to Miami every year to moderate an annual education forum.

Ms. Compton used her experience in managing and team building in the non-profit sector and developing and marketing special events, to launch the mentoring program. Her desire to help patients and family members through the transplant process was sparked by personal experience. Her son, Erik Compton, a professional golfer and winner of the 2003 Michelin Guadalajara Classic on the Canadian Tour, had a heart transplant when he was a teenager. He had a second heart transplant in May.

The Living Well With Transplants conference is part of the U of A Hospital's celebrations marking the one thousandth liver transplant at the Edmonton medical centre. Close to 4,000 organs have been transplanted at the U of A Hospital since that historic kidney operation in 1967.

The world-renown Islet Transplant Centre, which developed the Edmonton Protocol, is located here as is Canada's first Comprehensive Tissue Centre to be accredited by the American Association of Tissue Banks.

Encouraged by the large turnout, ITNS and GoodHearts are already planning the third annual Living Well With Transplants Patient Education Day for 2009.

## **2008 Presenters & Topics**

Benefits of Exercise Training Post Transplant  
Dr. Mark Haykowsky

Gratitude: A New Perspective for a New Life  
Dr. Philip Watkins

Expanding Your Sodium Savvy  
Grace Hubert, RD, CDE

Medication Use – Truth, Lies and Common Sense  
Dr. Glen Pearson

Mentoring – Enhancing Lives With Another Perfect Match  
Eli Compton & Dr. Patricia Scott