



Winter 2016

Welcome to the **Winter Edition** of the LTU Patient Newsletter!

2016 has been a busy year for the Victorian Liver Transplant Unit and we are delighted to have transplanted more than 40 patients so far! We hope that organ donation rates continue to improve and we can get more patients off the waiting list.

While my colleagues are toiling away in Melbourne's winter (a cold one so far I hear!), I'm enjoying some beautiful weather in the Northern Hemisphere on sabbatical leave. This is an opportunity for senior medical staff to look at new ideas or technology with the aim of improving care in Australia.

My sabbatical is focused on intestinal transplantation and perfusion techniques for liver preservation. We have done some basic research on pumping livers with blood prior to transplant rather than the traditional method of storing them on ice. My hope is to introduce this technique into clinical practice in the next year or so. One of our physicians, Dr Adam Testro, is also on sabbatical leave with the aim of formalising the funding arrangements for intestinal transplantation in Australia.

I hope you all have a safe and warm winter and look forward to seeing you in Spring!

Graham Starkey

Upcoming Groups

Upcoming Pre Transplant Support Groups:

Tuesday 16th August, 10:30am – 12:30pm, Room 4.5, level 4 Austin Tower. Topics: Organ donation and screening of *'The Dinner Party'* a film by Paul Cox.

Upcoming Post Transplant Support Group:

Thursday 18th August, 1:00pm – 1:30pm, Room 4.5, level 4 Austin Tower. Topics: Medications and Physiotherapy Post Transplant.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JAMES!!

James, originally from New Zealand, has been successfully transplanted with a stomach, duodenum, small bowel, pancreas and liver - known as multi-visceral transplantation. Multiple organ transplant is not available in New Zealand. James, who has come to love Australia, is not sure where he will end up living but is thrilled that he now has a choice. James has been having fun eating for the first time in a quarter of a century. He hasn't found any food he doesn't like so far!

James is looking forward to being able to swim, play tennis, get a job, have a girlfriend and travel in the future!



James Chapman celebrating his 25th Birthday with his mum in ICU!

Staff news

Welcome and welcome back to the LTU Pastoral Care Workers Angie Mok and Luke Bowen!

Our dietician Gemma Collins is taking an extra year of maternity leave and will be spending some of it overseas! Brooke Chapman and Kate Hamilton will continue seeing waitlist, intestinal and inpatients, and Alice Bastable is taking care of post transplant patients, as well as doing a research project. Brooke works Tuesday-Friday, Kate Monday-Wednesday and Alice is Monday-Friday.

Reminders...

Appointments:

Please ring to make an appointment before coming to clinic or one of the Allied Health Departments. It may not be possible to see a staff member or a doctor if you just pop in.

For post transplant clinic appointments call 9496 3972 or 9496 5321. For pre transplant clinic appointments please call 9496 5353.

Travel Clinic:

If you are travelling overseas it's advisable to attend the travel clinic at Austin for your immunisations, please tell the post transplant nurse your plans and they will make the referral for you. You will need to allow 6 weeks for immunisations to work. Support letters can be provided once you have received medical clearance to travel.

Post Transplant Gym:

The post transplant gym sessions are an essential part of the recovery treatment programme and result in better outcomes for patients. They are held every Monday and Thursday, level 3 Austin Tower next to Ambulatory Care from 9.30 to 10.30. Jacqui and Carolyn dedicate this time to physiotherapy for our LTU patients and are ALWAYS happy to see you and to assist in your recovery. When you go to clinic let the reception staff know you are going to the gym session and you will not lose your place in the line to see doctors.

Post Transplant Clinic:

Our clinics are extremely busy, so we ask that you do not come without an appointment. For scripts or to discuss issues with the coordinators, please call either clinic or the office and leave a message. We will get back to you as soon as clinic is finished.

Please ensure that if you miss an appointment, call us to re-schedule. We send out text messages when you do not come to clinic, but it is your responsibility to have a follow up appointment and enough medication to last you to your next appointment. If your clinic appointments are more than 3 monthly, it is preferable to have your bloods done prior to the visit. This enables us to review your blood results and make any necessary medication changes when you are in clinic.

Notices

Donate Life Week is 31st July to 7th August. There will be an information stall at Austin Health and volunteers are needed! If you are interested please contact the post transplant nurses on 9496 3972.

The 2016 **Australian Transplant Games** are approaching – 24th of September to the 1st of October in Western Sydney. This is a wonderful event open to all ages and abilities and gives the transplant community a chance to get together, catch up, celebrate and have fun! To register, go to www.australiantransplantgames.com

Paul Cox, liver transplant recipient (2009) has passed away. Paul was a renowned film maker, photographer and artist and made a significant contribution to raising awareness of organ donation including producing the documentary *The Dinner Party* and feature film *Force of Destiny*. Some of the filming of *Force of Destiny* occurred at the Austin and involved many patients and staff!

Paul has been described as the “Father of Australian Independent Cinema”, “Australia’s most prolific film auteur” lauded for his warmth, insight, humanity and “artistic purity.”

Paul has left a lasting impression on the film world, the transplant community and Austin Health. He will be greatly missed.

News from Dietetics!

The dieticians are running a research project titled '*The Prevention of Excess Weight Gain Following Liver Transplantation*', following an audit that found 70% of patients are overweight or obese by 2 years post transplant. The study aims to determine if intensive nutrition education after liver transplant helps prevent excess weight gain and improve outcomes. Patients can be enrolled into the study at 1-month post-transplant if they have a BMI >20, and will be seen frequently by the dietician over the first 12-months following transplant. We will be educating patients on maintaining a healthy weight, measuring body composition, monitoring blood tests and measuring physical activity levels. The study has ethics approval and commenced recruitment last year. If you'd like any further information on the study please contact Brooke or Alice.