Solid Organ Transition Program

What happens when children with solid organ transplants become adults? And when do they actually become adults? At age 18? 21? 25? These are common questions that pediatric transplant teams face as our patients live beyond the second decade.

The liver transplant team at Ann & Robert H Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago has had an informal transition readiness program for many years. When the patient reached age 14, the team would discuss transition to adult care, and teach the patient about their disease, medications and insurance. When the time for transfer was nearer at hand, the team would discuss options with the patient and their family and attempt to find a transplant center that would care for them as well as accept their insurance.

Despite this, some patients were unable or unwilling to make appointments with adult health care providers. This was most visible in patients who ran out of medications, and developed complications or presented to the Lurie Children’s Emergency Room years after they had been supposedly transitioned.

In June 2013, the Solid Organ Transition Program was established to:
- Provide a formal transition process
- Introduce patients and their families to adult caregivers
- Improve self-efficacy of adolescent transplant recipients and their parents
- Improve long term outcomes of solid organ transplant recipients.

Our aim is to incorporate the program across all organ groups so it becomes a rite of passage for solid organ transplant recipients who must successfully “graduate” before transferring care to an adult provider.

The efforts of Jessica Zimont, Manager of Transplant Services, and Joanne Singleton, Senior Social Worker, must be highlighted as they have been the driving force behind the successful launch of this program.

Our accomplishments to date include:
- 70% attendance rate
- Awarded grant to improve transfer of care by Lurie Children’s
- Will hold the first combined clinic with transplant hepatologist, Dr. Levitsky, in March 2016

We look forward to expanding collaboration with our adult colleagues and continuing our research in this area.

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