

## Milestones 50 years in the making

For more than 50 years, Transplant Manitoba – Gift of Life has been providing organ donation services and kidney transplantation for Manitobans.

Follow our journey.

**1967** – Dialysis unit opens at Winnipeg General Hospital (now [HSC Winnipeg](#)).

**1968** – To prepare for the possibility of kidney transplant services, a committee of trustees, administration and medical staff spent a year determining if the Winnipeg General Hospital had the necessary facilities and staff to support it. A moral and ethics committee was also formed to establish recommendations and procedures to guide the process.

**1969** – In October, the hospital’s Board of Trustees officially approved the life-transforming procedure.

**1969** – First kidney transplant performed in Manitoba in November. The team included Drs. Allan Downs, Ash Thompson, John Wade, John MacKenzie and W. Grahame. Learn more about this [first surgery](#) from one of the team members who participated in this historic event.

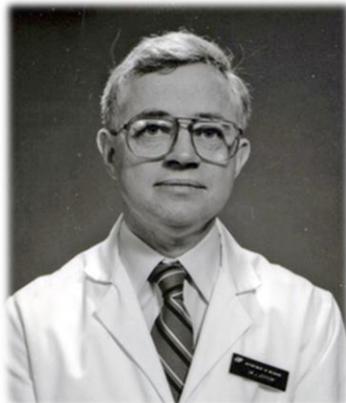
**1971** – Living Kidney Donor Program begins.

**1972** – Pediatric kidney transplant program begins.

**1979** – Ten-year celebration. 178 kidney transplants to date.



**Dr. Allan Downs**



**Dr. John Jeffery**

**1985** – Dr. John Jeffery held the position of Director, Manitoba Renal Transplant Program for nearly 20 years after retiring in 2005. Thanks to his vision, the program developed into what it is today, an internationally recognized centre for clinical and research expertise.

**1994** – Lung transplantation begins in Manitoba.

**1997** – Introduction of the [Tree of Life](#), a tribute to the generosity of organ donors. The first annual donor recognition event was held and leaves bearing the first name of every donor were placed on the Tree. Hundreds attended.

**The first Tree of Life event was held downtown at Eaton Place (now Cityplace) in 1997.**

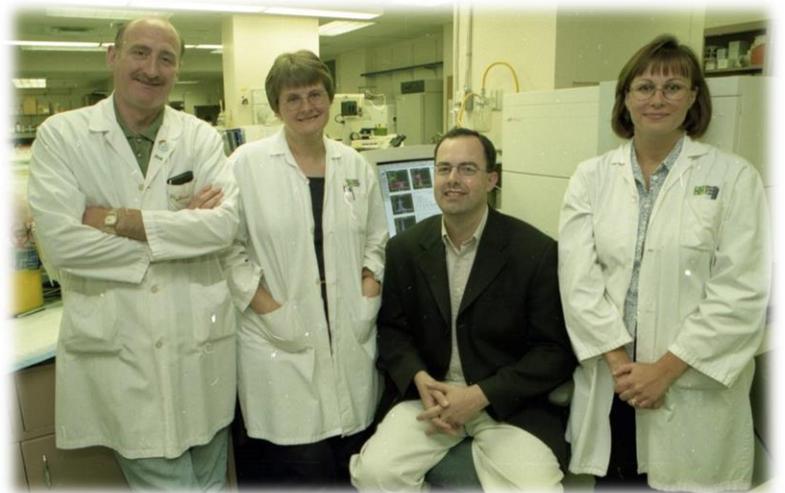


**Breaking ground at Assiniboine Park for the Garden of Life during National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week (NOTDAW), April 1997, with a donor mom and the provincial Health Minister.**

**1998** – The [Garden of Life](#) begins to bloom in Assiniboine Park in honour of all organ and tissue donors.

**1999** – A Canadian first – a double lung transplant using lobes donated by living donors.

**2000** – Using a Kidney Foundation of Canada - Manitoba branch grant to purchase a flow cytometer, medical director Dr. Peter Nickerson and the team began investigating whether flow cytometry cross-matching could prevent early graft loss by detecting lower levels of antibodies. Transplant Manitoba was the first centre in Canada to use flow cross-matching as the standard of care.



**Dr. Peter Nickerson, seated, is with Transplant Immunology Lab staff marking the arrival of flow cytometry cross-matching – a more sensitive compatibility test to match donor organs to recipients.**

**2003** – Manitoba Transplant Program marks 1000 kidney transplants.

**2006** – The Adult Kidney Transplant Program proposed the creation of an Organ Donor Organization (Gift of Life) and requested support from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for additional

resources to improve access to transplant and promote an increase transplants performed. From the coordination of organ donation was handled by the Manitoba Transplant Program. In 2006, the program was renamed and restructured to Transplant Manitoba – Gift of Life.

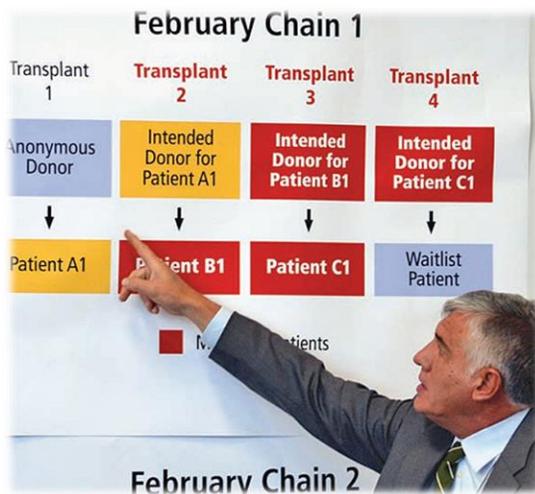
**2009** – The national Living Donor Paired Exchange (now Kidney Paired Donation) Program begins.

**2010** – Development of an organ donation and transplantation education resource, [Life is a Gift](#), to support Manitoba’s Grade 11 Biology curriculum.

**2012** – Two living kidney donor chains took place over three days in February at hospitals in five different provinces, including Manitoba for the first time.



**Manitoba’s online organ and tissue donor registry, [signupforlife.ca](#), launched during NOTDAW 2012 with the Premier, Health Minister and radio personality Ace Burpee.**



**2012** – Launch of [www.signupforlife.ca](#), Manitoba’s online organ and tissue donor registry.

**2014** – To ensure families have compassionate end-of-life care and the option to consider organ donation when the time is right, a mandatory referral policy, Routine Notification, was introduced in 2014. Since then, the percentage of all potential donors referred to the Gift of Life program has consistently improved.

**Adult Kidney Transplant Program** medical director at the time, Dr. David Rush explained how Manitoba’s first living kidney donor chain unfolded during a 2012 press conference.

**2015** – [Launch of the national Highly Sensitized Patient Program](#) at HSC Winnipeg.

**2015** – [Donation after Cardiocirculatory Death](#) or DCD becomes available in Manitoba offering more families the option to consider organ donation.

**2015** – Surgical services within the Manitoba Lung Transplant Program are transferred to the Edmonton Lung Transplant Program.

**2016** – Introduction of the [Gift of Life flag](#) with a donor family.



**The Gift of Life flag design was unveiled with a donor family in April during NOTDAW 2016. The flag was first raised that summer in honour of a donor.**

**2017** – The [Tree of Life](#) is welcomed home to HSC Winnipeg by the team and a donor family.



**A donor family was part of the event welcoming the Tree of Life to HSC Winnipeg in 2017.**



**Dr. David Rush, seen here with recipients, was part of the \$5.5 million announcement to develop beautiful new space for transplant patients at HSC Winnipeg.**

**2019** – Thanks to two anonymous gifts to the [Health Sciences Centre Foundation](#), HSC Winnipeg will become home to a [new, state-of-the-art Ambulatory Care Clinic](#) for transplant patients at HSC Winnipeg.

**2021** – The [HSC Transplant Wellness Centre](#) officially opened in April 2021.

