

MUSC Lancaster celebrates 69 kidney transplants

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Content

MUSC Health celebrated the first anniversary of its Mid-Carolina's transplant program July 24. Since its inception, the program, based at MUSC Health — Lancaster Medical Center, has completed 69 kidney transplants.

During the celebration, Founders Federal Credit Union CEO Bruce Brumfield unveiled the new Founders Atrium at MUSC Lancaster, after its \$500,000 donation to the hospital to help get the new transplant center started.

“That support is invaluable in helping us move this forward to cover initial startup costs, staffing, infrastructure, operational needs, things of that nature,” said MUSC Lancaster CEO Scott Broome. “You have a number of patients, once you start that are that are unfunded, and so Founders was able to help us navigate those early days while we were awaiting that Medicare certification.”

Dr. Prince Mohan Anand, director of transplant services, echoed Broome's comments.

“That's where (Founder's) support is great — it would not be possible to start something like this in a smaller hospital in a smaller rural community” without it, he said.

Broome said the kidney transplant center is necessary here because patients with failing kidneys who receive a transplant are seven times more likely to survive than those who remain only on dialysis.

Now that Lancaster has a center, area patients don't have to travel out of state or to Charleston for the procedure, recovery and follow-up appointments, saving time, gas and, ultimately, lives.

“It's a big, big improvement for quality of life for a number of patients here and again, your support is invaluable and I thank you for that,” Anand said.

He also said MUSC Lancaster is on par or better than the national average for transplant outcomes.

“So if nobody knew (about) Lancaster County about two years ago, the number of people who know Lancaster County has gone up significantly,” Anand said. “We have transplanted patients from Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. There are people from four states who have never thought of Lancaster (who) are coming actually to Lancaster to get transplanted.”

Besides the Carolinas, kidney donations are also coming in from Georgia, Tennessee, California and Texas.

“I’m fortunate enough to serve on the local board, and when you sit there and listen to the type of caliber of professionals that we’re bringing in to Lancaster to practice in Lancaster, not a couple of hours a day, but every day, I think it’s phenomenal,” Brumfield said. “It’s certainly attributable to the power of the MUSC brand.”

First Lancaster transplant

Janice Cole, 69, was the first Lancaster resident to receive a transplant there, but the center’s 42nd transplant. Incidentally, Cole was a nurse at the Lancaster hospital from 1975-2006, when it was Springs Memorial.

Cole was diagnosed with kidney disease in 2014 and remained stable until 2019, when she had to begin dialysis treatment. She also had a surgical procedure called peritoneal dialysis, while she waited for on the transplant list.

“I was listed at Atrium (in Charlotte) around 2020,” Cole said. That month, her nephrologist told her they had extended the area of donors from Virginia to Georgia, which meant there would have a longer wait time.

“All of a sudden, I heard at the dialysis center that our hospital was doing transplants,” she said. “It was just unbelievable.”

Cole said being able to stay in her hometown and only drive 10 minutes to MUSC, made her aware of the strain the transplant procedure puts on both patients and their families.

“In my mind, I was going to be going to Charleston, because they told me that they thought that I would get a kidney soon,” she said. “So I had all that planned, like a hotel — I knew I would have to have to stay there and then be driven back and forth.”

Cole’s transplant took place March 1 at MUSC Lancaster.

“I get emotional going to bed at night,” Cole said. “I don’t have to do my weight, do my temperature, check my blood pressure, write all that down, hook up big bags and tubing to a machine, stay on that machine all night long. I didn’t really get a lot of sleep. Getting to go to bed and get sleep is something that other people take for granted.”

Transplant process

Transplant surgeon Ahmad Alqassieh said the process is quite long, from the qualifications to the post-operation steps. He said the center cannot accept any patients in end-stage renal disease.

Once they qualify, doctors must make sure the patient's body can withstand the surgery.

"It's more of a trauma surgery, because we get the phone call in the middle of the night saying, hey, we have a kidney available and this kidney is looking good, do you want this kidney or not?" he said.

Alqassieh said the transplant surgery takes an average of three to four hours, and surgeons work to create a new pocket near the groin to place the kidney. After the procedure, patients have several post-op appointments with doctors to ensure the transplant is accepted.

Cole said she would tell future transplant patients to expect a comprehensive program alongside the surgical procedure, from labs, to surgery, to nutritionists, to wound care, to medications. She also said while every patient is different, it is fair to expect some pain after the procedure.

"I think people (can) see a small town hospital as inadequate for something this huge, but I'm telling you, they are wonderful," Cole said. "I would recommend MUSC Lancaster for kidney transplants any day to anyone."

Child images

LANNWS-08-02-23 MUSC KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS 1



LANNWS-08-02-23 MUSC KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS 2



LANNWS-08-02-23 MUSC KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS 3



