Kidney and Pancreas Transplant

Transplant Institute
The Allegheny Health Network Transplant Institute’s patient survival rate is above the national average and **among the best in the country**.

— The Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR)
One of the most thriving kidney and pancreas transplant programs in the country, the Allegheny Health Network has vastly experienced and talented surgeons who work with a specialized health-care team to provide exceptional care for exceptional results.

Our transplant patients’ survival rates are above the national average and are among the best in the country. But, we are a team that never becomes complacent because of our success stories. Instead, we continually evolve our program by utilizing the most innovative treatments and techniques and by striving for even better care and better results.

Program at a glance

- Established in 1987
- Approved by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), Medicare and Medicaid
- A patient survival rate that is above the national average and among the best in the country for live-donor kidney and deceased-donor kidney, according to data from The Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR)
- Multidisciplinary team approach: surgeons, nephrologists, transplant nurse coordinators, social workers, pharmacists and other health-care professionals work together to care for transplant candidates, recipients, donors and their families
- Extensive research endeavors and clinical trials that translate into medical discoveries and cures, giving our patients a direct gateway to continually evolving treatment options
- Personalized treatment plans for each transplant patient and high-quality, compassionate, patient-focused care
Expertise
Patient-focused
Progressive

Our patients have direct access to some of the most cutting-edge treatments and therapies as we continually acquire new medical knowledge and translate our findings to help save lives and improve outcomes.

Expertise
Pioneers and innovators – these are the surgeons of the Allegheny Health Network Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team. Each of our patients is provided with the finest expertise, leading-edge capabilities and dedicated attention. Our comprehensive transplant program allows us to take an all-encompassing approach to medicine. We collaborate and share our various areas of expertise to determine the best treatment plan for each patient and help to ensure a safe and successful transplant.

Patient-focused
We understand how overwhelmed patients and their families feel after being told they have end-stage kidney disease. This is why, day in and day out, our staff works as a team to provide patients with extensive support and numerous resources. We explain all aspects of the transplant process to our patients, so they can prepare for their journeys ahead. Our team communicates regularly with patients’ primary care physicians to make certain that every health-care professional involved in a patient’s case is well-informed before, during and after surgery.

Progressive
Allegheny Health Network is committed to conducting basic, clinical and translational research that significantly contributes to finding more effective ways to prevent, diagnose and treat kidney and pancreatic disease. We continually acquire new medical knowledge and translate our findings into cutting-edge treatments and therapies that can improve patients’ prognoses and even save lives.

Advanced imaging, such as this 3-D CT scan, provides our physicians with detailed and accurate representations of the organs that we are evaluating.
I’ve been dealing with kidney failure since I was 16. I’ve had two kidney transplants – the first lasted 12 years, the second lasted 10. They were both from non-living donors. I had been on the transplant list for five years, waiting a third transplant. My health was deteriorating in those last few months. I was on hemodialysis four hours a day, three days a week. I was drained and so weak that I couldn’t do much of anything. I would spend the days I had off from dialysis recovering from the treatment the day before.

My wife, Kristin, and my son, Johnathon, were both tested to find out if they were eligible kidney donors. My daughter, Jess, was too young at the time. But then, when she turned 20, she didn’t tell any of us and went on her own to Allegheny General Hospital to find out if she was a compatible donor. And she was.

As a father, you want to protect your children and not have any harm come to them, so I was reluctant to have her do it. But after talking with Allegheny’s transplant professionals and family and friends, I realized she was giving me an incredible gift. I can honestly say that I probably wouldn’t be here today if she had not done this for me.

Jess’ surgery went very well, and so did mine. The doctors and staff at Allegheny General took such great care of us, and they still do. They are such talented professionals and caring people. It’s been an incredible journey.

As for our lives, Jess returned to work as a nursing assistant a few weeks after surgery. And me – I have my life back again because of my daughter. I’m a school police officer for the Derry Area School District, and I’m on the Derry Borough Council. I also love animals, so I belong to the Westmoreland Council Animal Response Team, which helps take care of animals that have been in disasters like a fire in their home. I’m also taking classes to become a K9 medic.

I can’t answer fire and ambulance calls anymore as an EMT, so I’ve shifted gears to find new ways to help. Our community was such a tremendous support to me and my family through the transplant process. I want to always try to reach out and give back. And someday I’ll find a way to repay Jess.
More than 100,000 kidney transplant candidates in the United States are awaiting a donated organ to become available. For many, the wait can be long, causing patients and their families to feel anxious, uncertain and frustrated.

Most kidneys for transplant come from deceased donors. However, there aren’t enough of these organs for everyone who needs one, leaving some patients on the organ candidate waiting list for more than five years. Even worse, approximately 18 people die each day while waiting for a life-saving transplant that can’t take place because of the shortage of donated organs.

This is why the need for living donor kidneys is so vital. Each year, more than 6,000 transplants are made possible by living donors – family, friends and even anonymous altruistic individuals.

It is because of this extraordinary sentiment of giving that the Allegheny Health Network Living Donor Kidney Program can continue to give hope to many transplant patients. Our extremely active and successful Living Donor Program has a team focused solely on transplant patients, donors and their families. These experienced professionals ensure the health, safety and recovery of each living donor so the donor can quickly return to a full and active life after surgery.

A nurse for 20 years, Sherri Kearns (left) saw firsthand the burden that dialysis places on patients’ health, emotions and lives as they endure the treatment several hours a week, oftentimes for many years. She decided that if she was in good health when she retired, she would become an altruistic kidney donor.

In October 2013, Sherri donated her kidney, and Sharon Kallner (right) was the recipient. Since the successful transplant, Sharon has returned to a wonderfully active life, continuing her full-time job as an office manager, seeing both of her sons marry, and enjoying a trip to Las Vegas.
For the past three years, we received the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Award for achieving an exceptional consent rate of 93 percent for prospective living donor candidates.
We are the only transplant center in Pittsburgh – and one of just a few in the country – to use **advanced robotic equipment** to remove donor kidneys. This minimally invasive method helps to reduce scarring, blood loss and recovery time for patients.
Donor program highlights

• For the past three years, we received the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Award for achieving an exceptional consent rate of 93 percent for prospective living donor candidates.

• Our surgeons offer minimally invasive surgical options to living kidney donors, including advanced robotic surgery. This procedure – called a laparoscopic nephrectomy – requires only four small incisions to remove a donor kidney. We are the only transplant center in Pittsburgh, and one of just a few in the country, to perform this innovative procedure.

• We provide a specialized team dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and recovery of each living donor so that they can return to full and active lives after surgery.

• Our institute is an active member of paired kidney donation chains, which have become a way for transplant candidates to receive a kidney, even if their willing living donor is not a good match for donating to them. Organized by the National Kidney Registry and coordinated locally by the Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE), the exchange involves matching multiple incompatible donor-recipient pairs with each other to find good donor-recipient pairs. In some cases, altruistic kidney donors can contribute to the process.

• We work closely with the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), a private non-profit organization that operates the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) under contract with the federal government.

Contacts

• Allegheny Health Network Transplant Institute Living Kidney Donor Program: 412.359.4441 or AHN.org

• National Kidney Registry: www.kidneyregistry.org

• Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE): 800.DONORS.7 or www.core.org

• United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS): 1.888.894.6361 or www.transplantliving.org
Allegheny Health Network Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team

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**Living donor advocate**

Eileen Pistelli, RN

**Physician assistants**

Amy Best, PA-C  
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Allegheny Health Network

For more than a century, the hospitals of Allegheny Health Network have been dedicated to providing exceptional patient care. Today, we continue this tradition by using the latest medical innovations to treat our patients. Gaining knowledge through research to constantly improve the care we deliver. And staffing our hospitals with experienced, expert and compassionate physicians, nurses and other health-care professionals who are dedicated to medicine, people and healing.

We provide patients with the right care, at the right place, at the right time. This means that we work as a team to coordinate patients’ care from start to finish. We ensure that each patient receives exceptional, advanced health services that result in the best possible outcome. And we offer easy access to care through our seven hospitals: Allegheny General, Allegheny Valley, Canonsburg, Forbes, Jefferson, Saint Vincent and West Penn; and also at 200 primary- and specialty-care practices that dot the tri-state area’s landscape.

Our physicians continually explore and develop new treatments that allow us to bring medical discoveries from the laboratory directly to our patients. These breakthroughs help to save lives and give our patients access to some of the most progressive approaches to medicine. Serving as a clinical campus for both Temple University School of Medicine and Drexel University College of Medicine, the network’s extensive fellowship and residency programs train the next generation of doctors.

With approximately 17,000 employees and more than 2,100 physicians, Allegheny Health Network’s distinguished medical programs have been recognized and accredited regionally and nationally. We have been named one of the country’s best health-care providers by U.S. News and World Report and have received accolades from numerous organizations, including Thomson Reuters, AARP, Healthgrades and Consumer Reports.

Contact us

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