

# Northern California Organ Transplant Support



Monthly Newsletter

June 2023 Volume XVI

## *Boosting the Number of Available Hearts*



Dr. Jacob Schroder, left, and Dr. Zachary Fitch perform a heart transplant at Duke University Hospital in Durham, N.C., in October 2022. Most transplanted hearts are from donors who are brain dead, but research published by Duke Health on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, shows a different approach can be just as successful and boost the number of available organs. It's called donation after circulatory death, a method long used to recover kidneys, and increasingly so with livers and other organs

but not for the more fragile hearts. Some estimate this change to organs after circulatory death may mean up to 30 percent more available hearts for transplant. (Shawn Rocco/Duke Health via AP)

## Does This Chart Surprise You?

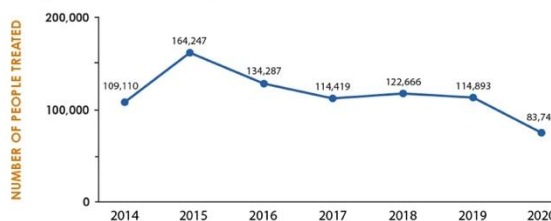
The chart below might surprise you. It surprises me no end. It shows that despite all the success we've seen with the new Hepatitis C Virus vaccines, which are a virtual cure, a 90%+ cure rate), the number of people being treated has been steadily declining from 2015 to 2020. At the moment the numbers of people taking the vaccines in 2022 and 2023 are soft and not yet reliable, but it appears this downward trend is continuing. I wonder why. One might think this simply shows the numbers are decreasing because fewer people are HCV positive. That is simply not the case. The CDC believes there are still nearly four million people in the US infected by HCV. That four million rate has been fairly constant for a decade or more. The number of liver transplants in 2021 exceeded 9,000 for the first time ever and 2022 there were just over 9,100. Liver transplants in 2023 are on track to exceed 2022 numbers. So we are doing more and transplants each year. Some might argue the cost for the vaccine is prohibitively high and that scares people away, but prices are going down and in some cases, few though they may be, you can get this vaccine in some cases for about \$5.00 a dose.

It's a mystery I thought worth pointing out. This virus is a killer and, as a group we know that better than most people. Perhaps these numbers are reminding us that HCV, once called a Silent Killer, still is because the symptoms come on slowly most of the time, and are often ignored initially, but they only get worse over time. When these vaccines appeared some ten years ago I imagined HCV as the number one reason for a liver transplant would be supplanted by the former number one cause, alcohol abuse. But that is not the case. HCV still wears that crown of thorns, with fatty liver coming up fast.

The chart below shows the estimated annual numbers of people treated for hepatitis C in the U.S. from 2014 to 2020. The number is highest in 2015 (the end of the first year of the study), and lowest in 2020. Note the overall decline in participants.

### THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO INITIATED\* HEPATITIS C TREATMENT IN THE U.S. DECLINED FROM 2015 TO 2020

COVID-19-related disruptions to hepatitis C testing and treatment likely contributed to the decline in 2020



\*Based on national prescription claims data

For more information, visit [cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom](https://cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom)





### **Living Donor Protection Act of 2023**

Our last newsletter addressed Assembly Bill 2504. It is sitting in California's Assembly Chamber awaiting consideration. But the federal government and some States are starting to enact and pass bills extending tax credits to employers and individuals and helping would-be living donors get the paid time off they need to give the gift of life without hesitation. I say that is a good start. They should not let the additional medical costs for living donors be a big problem down line. There is an increasing awareness in this country that living donors can ease a lot of pressure in our world. We need to take steps to see that all obstacles are off the table. One such piece of legislation I referred to above is the '**Living Donor Protection Act of 2023**'. The act aims to remove barriers to living donation and provide greater protections for living organ donors. There is no doubt a shortage of deceased organs for transplant in this country. Congress must do everything possible to promote living donation. I think we should recognize, even applaud our Congressional Champions for reintroducing the **Living Donor Protection Act of 2023** and for recognizing the critical need to support living organ donors.

"We must do more to remove the barriers that keep Americans from life-saving organ donations," said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). "The bipartisan Living Donor Protection Act would help ensure that individuals who are willing to save someone's life through organ donation can do so without worrying that they'll face harsh repercussions, like insurance discrimination or job loss. Enshrining these protections for donors will help save lives, and I will keep working with my colleagues across the aisle to finally pass this commonsense legislation."

#### **About the Living Donor Protection Act**

It will protect living organ donors and promote organ donation in three easy, low-cost ways:

- Prohibits companies and individuals from denying or limiting coverage and from charging higher premiums for living organ donors;
- Amends the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993* to specifically include living organ donation as a serious health condition for private and civil service employees, and;
- Directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to update their materials on live organ donation to reflect these new protections and encourage more individuals to consider donating an organ.



A very good friend of mine works at Ikea in North Sacramento.  
His birthday is June 30<sup>th</sup>. I thought I would buy him a cake for the occasion.  
He can get his own candles.



**This Month's Meeting: Sunday, June 11 2023**

**1PM – 3:30PM**

To Join Zoom Meeting, Just click on the highlighted line below and enter if you dare.

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87866973945>**

We hope you will be able to make this meeting. We have been receiving calls from various sources asking about our group. We anticipate seeing three new people at our meeting this month. Two of them are pre-transplant patients and one is a member of another support group. Your very presence at the meeting shows them they are not alone, adrift in a vast sea taking them who knows where. We can demonstrate to them the depth and breadth of our organ transplant knowledge and experience. This is a big deal. We can provide help, encouragement and understanding, particularly to those facing transplant. We can give them a better sense of the process and more importantly, see how our transplant improved our lives. As a group, we can make a difference in their lives and provide great comfort. Sometimes just seeing people actively participating in discussions is enough to give encouragement and hope. See you there!!!

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***When you get a chance check out our Website!!!:***

*Let us Know What you Think!*

I know I said this very thing last month, but the message is important: If you haven't done so, just type in:

**[www.norcaltransplantsupport.org](http://www.norcaltransplantsupport.org)**

You will see what your website team has created. It goes a long way toward telling our tale. Please take the time to go over what was designed by our team of volunteers, Jan Escamilla, Eileen Chandler, Renee and David Hawkyard, Scott Thompson, Jim Deyo, Spencer Baker, Sandy and a few others.

### **Agenda**

- **Welcome**
- **Introductions**
- **Social Media & our Presence**
  - **Open discussion**
  - **Member Story**
  - **Adjournment**



2023 Meeting Dates	
January 8	July 9
February 12	August 13
March 12	September 10
April 16	October 8
May 21	November 12
June 11	December 10

*Our Leadership Team*

President – Jim Deyo.....[Jdeyo@att.net](mailto:Jdeyo@att.net)  
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Treasurer..... (to be determined)  
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**Editor's Note:** If you have ideas regarding subjects you'd like to address or if you found value in this newsletter, please let us know. Contact Bob Bilyeu at [bob\\_bilyeu@yahoo.com](mailto:bob_bilyeu@yahoo.com) or call at (916) 675-2721

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