

Liver Transplant Program Established at OHSU

The history of the liver transplant program at Oregon Health & Science University is intricate and not often common knowledge to those outside the OHSU community. Since 1988, liver transplants in the Portland area have only been performed at the OHSU-affiliated Veteran Affairs Hospital. **C. Wright Pinson, M.B.A., M.D.** served as Chief Resident in General Surgery at OHSU in 1986 and during his fellowship at Harvard, established a liver transplantation program at the Portland VA Hospital. The VA became one of only four medical centers in the United States where liver transplants were performed. Veterans traveled across the country to undergo surgery in Portland. However, OHSU patients were also in need of this service and two-thirds of transplant patients at the VA were actually from the university.

In May 2012, regulatory changes mandated that university patients at the VA be moved to a Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) accredited facility. The VA does not fall under the authority of CMS, rather it is under the federal government. Suddenly, the Division of Abdominal Organ Transplant Surgery and the numerous staff involved in transplant surgery were faced with the colossal charge to create a transplant program at OHSU within six weeks. “We worked night and day to get this done,” says Division Chief of Abdominal Organ Transplant Surgery, **Susan Orloff, M.D., F.A.C.S.** She explains that the biggest challenge in constructing a liver transplant program at OHSU was the time crunch, as most programs are established within a nine month time frame.



Surgeon and Division Chief,
Susan Orloff, M.D.

Executive Director at Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank, **Mike Seely**, Interim AHA at OHSU, **Marc Edelman** and VA nurse, **Katie Wasinger, R.N.** pushed forward to simulate the VA program within OHSU walls by training OHSU nurses, pharmacists and blood bank staff. Other necessities included entering pre-op and post-op formulas into EPIC, establishing a stat lab for the OR and a blood bank for pathologists and recreating any ancillary services needed to support a 24-hour surgery center dealing



Dr. Orloff performs a liver transplant with her team.

with major blood requests. OHSU nurses and staff shadowed those at the VA. VA staff taught their colleagues specific order writing and care pathways. Logistically, the operating room also needed to fit the needs of liver transplant surgery, which is far more complex and risky than a liver resection. The team installed renal dialysis machines and ordered surgical instruments and fresh frozen plasma in the event that numerous liters of blood were needed.

A mock transplant was performed at OHSU on July 19, 2012 and a week later the program was in motion. Katie Wasinger scrubbed in on the first six transplants to

ensure smooth sailing. As of November 30, 2012, the OHSU team has performed nine transplants, all successful. Dr. Orloff attributes the program's success to the motivation and dedication of every individual involved and is thankful for the enthusiasm and positivity of her staff and those at the VA. “It is such an inspiration to see the energy behind this and it has been a whole group effort,” she says.

Dr. Orloff is excited that transplant surgery can now serve as a front and center face of OHSU. She highlights her goals for continuing to grow the program, which include maintaining and developing an excellent team, expanding the volume of transplants, upholding survival rates and outcomes and moving towards more cutting edge surgeries. She is confident that the transplant program and its ability to incorporate patients with a multitude of hepatobiliary and pancreatic disorders will bring new patients and referrals to OHSU and enhance the university as a multidisciplinary center. Read more about Dr. Orloff and her accomplishments as part of the School of Medicine Labyrinth Movement at <http://www.ohsu.edu/labyrinth>.