Louisville hand transplant program celebrates a milestone

On March 20, the Louisville Hand Transplant Program marked the 15th anniversary of its first — and the world’s most successful — hand transplant. The practitioners who celebrated this achievement were the Louisville Vascularized Composite Allograft (VCA) program, a partnership of physicians, researchers and health care providers from Jewish Hospital, the Christine M. Kleinert Institute for Hand and Microsurgery (CMKI), the Kleinert Kutz Hand Care Center, and the University of Louisville.

Matt Scott, a New Jersey native, became the first patient to undergo a hand transplant at Jewish Hospital in 1999. Scott lost his dominant left hand on December 23, 1985, in a blast from an M80 firecracker. Today he has remarkable function in his transplanted hand, which he uses for everyday living activities. He is the director of the EMT and paramedic school operated by Virtua Health.

“The last 15 years have been nothing short of spectacular. I’m doing everything with much more mobility and ability, and I’m taking on things I didn’t think I’d ever be able to do again. Things are exactly as I’d hoped. My team put me back together and put me back on track.” — Matt Scott

The success of Scott’s transplant has impacted the future of both transplantation and reconstructive surgery around the world. Since his procedure, the Louisville VCA program has performed eight more hand transplants on seven patients, including a double hand transplant in 2010. Donnie Rickelman, the Louisville program’s seventh hand transplant recipient, joined Scott at a celebration marking the milestone.

“We are very pleased with Scott and the attention his transplant has sparked around the globe,” said Dr. Joseph Kutz, MD, primary investigator and partner with Kleinert Kutz Hand Care Center. “He has proven to the world that transplantation can be successful, and can allow people to get back to their normal activities.”

"It's an ongoing effort by everyone involved to make sure that patients like Matt Scott do well not just physically, but also mentally,” said Michael Marvin, MD, transplant surgeon, Jewish Hospital/University of Louisville. “But we wouldn’t be here today without the generosity of organ donors and donor families who make the decision to choose organ donation to save and enhance the lives of others.”

The success of the Louisville VCA program shows great promise. It has attracted additional funding for ongoing transplantation and research. Early funding from Jewish Hospital & St. Mary’s Foundation, also part of KentuckyOne Health, for
research on composite tissue allotransplantation and immunotherapy helped to bring about the nation’s first hand transplant. Other hand transplants were funded by the Department of Defense. In late 2012, Jewish Hospital & St. Mary’s Foundation allocated $1.5 million for the Louisville VCA program. The funds were to be used to bring potential hand transplant recipients to Louisville for screening, for performance of the hand transplantation surgery, and for patient therapy and rehabilitation after surgery.

In 2013, as part of the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (AFIRM) research program, the Louisville VCA program was awarded $850,000 to fund a clinical trial of a new treatment that will help prevent rejection of hand transplants. AFIRM II is a five-year, $75 million federally-funded project that will focus on applying regenerative medicine to battlefield injuries.

The clinical trial will be led by primary investigator Dr. Kutz, and will take place at Jewish Hospital and Kleinert Kutz. Research will take place at the CMKI and the Cardiovascular Innovation Institute, a partnership of Jewish Hospital and the University of Louisville.

The AFIRM II funding will enable Louisville VCA researchers to explore the potential for a cell-based therapy to improve the immune system’s response to a hand transplant, and ultimately lessen or eliminate the need for immune-suppressant drugs. Results of this trial will be far-reaching. They will benefit not only military patients, but all hand transplant recipients.

National diabetes prevention grant awarded to Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation

Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation recently received funding from the National Diabetes Prevention Program. This grant provides a 16-week program of weekly meetings followed by six months of monthly meetings to participants. This program began March 17 at Saint Joseph Mount Sterling. Currently the program in Bardstown at Flager Memorial Hospital has enrolled 13 participants. Saint Joseph East finished with 11 participants and 70% reaching their weight goals. Saint Joseph Berea has 12 participants, while Saint Joseph Hospital has 13 participants.

“Race for Healing and Hope” employee giving campaign kicks off

The ‘Race’ will kick off the week of April 21 at Saint Joseph Berea, Saint Joseph London and Saint Joseph Mount Sterling and end the Friday before the Kentucky Derby. Funds will support mission and outreach.

LexArts Fund for the Arts recognizes Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation

The Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation was recently recognized at the LexArtsFund for the Arts Kickoff Breakfast. A growing body of research shows that art in hospitals plays a key role in creating a healing environment which can improve patient outcomes. It has a demonstrably favorable effect on the speed of patient recovery, on a reduction in anxiety, and even a reduction...
in pain itself. LexArts has partnered with Saint Joseph Hospital and the Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation to provide the facilitation for artwork purchases for use in several KentuckyOne Health spaces in Lexington.

Since its inception in 2008, this program has resulted in the installation of over 200 works of art in six healthcare facilities in Central Kentucky, representing approximately $250,000 in sales to central Kentucky artists and to our economy. The last $150,000 of purchases was from private donations.

**Saint Joseph Berea Foundation Gala for Healing and Hope successful in inaugural year**

The 1st Annual Saint Joseph Berea Foundation Gala for Healing and Hope was held on Saturday, March 1 at the historic Boone Tavern in Berea, Kentucky. The gala raised nearly $31,000 with over 180 attendees to support the mission and outreach services of Saint Joseph Berea Hospital.

**Women’s 101 Basketball Clinic**

KentuckyOne Health sponsored the Women’s 101 Basketball Clinic at Rupp Arena on March 10. The group of 50 women was coached by former University of Kentucky stars Kyle Macy and Jack ‘Goose’ Givens. After completing drills and playing basketball on the historic Rupp court they received a tour of the Wildcat’s locker room. Di Boyer, Director of Major Gifts, represented the Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation.

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Left to right: Jennifer Bricking, Susan G. Komen; Di Boyer; Cheryl Norton, Kentucky American Water; Hope Hurst, Hurst Office Supply, and Cindy Williams