



Toronto General Hospital
University Health Network



Toronto General & Western
Hospital Foundation

MEDIA RELEASE

***New era of organ transplantation dawning
say international scientists and surgeons attending
Toronto General Hospital, University Health Network symposium***

(Toronto, Oct. 28, 2004) – The emerging science of using the body’s own natural defences to fight organ rejection is the next frontier in transplantation medicine, say Toronto General Hospital (TGH) physicians and scientists who will speak **Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2004** at a day-long international transplant symposium at the Royal Ontario Museum and on **Thursday, Nov. 4, 2004** at the Research Day in Transplantation at TGH.

Wednesday’s international symposium – “Improving Life through Innovation” – will bring together more than 275 transplant specialists and scientists from several countries. The event, a collaboration between TGH and the University of Toronto, is to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Multi Organ Transplant Program at TGH, which is Canada’s first and largest such program. TGH is a teaching hospital affiliated with the university and Dr. David Naylor, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine will officially open the symposium with Dr. Gary Levy, Medical Director of the TGH Multi Organ Transplant Program.

“We have entered a new era in organ transplantation,” says Dr. Levy. “The promise of tomorrow is that we will be able to conquer the greatest risks in transplantation – infection and rejection – by inducing the body to produce its own immunities and, ultimately, to fix itself.”

This will be accomplished, say members of the TGH team, by using new molecular diagnostic tools, technologies and therapeutics. For example:

- Dr. Shaf Keshavjee, a thoracic surgeon who heads the TGH lung transplant program and is a U of T Professor of Surgery, is pioneering research in ways to use gene therapy to fix injured organs. “The lung is a complex and fragile organ that is vulnerable to injury and rejection. If we can use genes to modify and repair
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it, we can improve transplant results,” says Dr. Keshavjee. He will speak on the development of new molecular diagnostic and treatment strategies such as gene therapy and the use of powerful molecular tools to repair and improve the quality of donor lungs, which could increase the number of transplants performed and improve outcomes after transplantation.

- Dr. Reginald Gorczynski, a senior TGH transplant researcher in cell biology and a U of T Professor of Surgery and Immunology, is developing a new treatment from a natural molecule which could play a key role in preventing organ rejection. He believes this important naturally-occurring molecule is key in “tickling the immune system in certain ways to convince other molecules to deliver a signal to suppress rejection.” Dr. Gorczynski will speak on the use of novel immune molecules in preventing organ rejection, with the potential for decreasing or eliminating the need for drug therapy after transplantation.
- Dr. Eleanor Fish, Head of the Division of Cellular and Molecular Biology at the Toronto General Research Institute and Professor of Immunology at U of T, is developing a new generation of interferons which can potentially limit infections, regulate the immune response to prevent organ rejection, and which would have less side effects than previous interferon therapies. Dr. Fish describes these proteins as one of the “master switches” in the immune system which could play a key role in regulating the immune response so that the body does not perceive an organ donation as “foreign” and therefore attack it.

International speakers at the transplant symposium include:

- Dr. Joel Cooper, who made medical history when he performed the world’s first successful single-lung transplant at TGH in 1983, and the world’s first successful double-lung transplant at TGH in 1986. Dr. Cooper is chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Cooper will speak on the history and development of lung transplantation.
- Dr. Pierre Clavien, a liver transplantation specialist who chairs the department of visceral and transplant surgery at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Dr. Clavien will speak on innovative therapies in liver transplantation.
- Dr. Koichi Tanaka, who has performed the most adult-to-child living-related liver transplants in the world and is currently president of Kyoto University Hospital, Japan. Dr. Tanaka will speak on living-donor liver transplantation.

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- Dr. Hannah Valentine, a professor of cardiovascular medicine and director of heart transplantation research at Stanford University Medical Center, California. Dr. Valentine will speak on the role of infection and inflammation in cardiac transplantation research.

Following the international symposium, speakers, faculty and guests, including many TGH organ recipients, will attend a gala fundraising event organized by the Toronto General & Western Hospital Foundation to support transplantation research and the completion of TGH's new transplant centre. The ***"Birthday Ball: Celebrating life through transplant excellence"*** takes place at the Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex, 25 British Columbia Rd., Exhibition Place, and will be hosted by Andy Barrie of CBC's Metro Morning.

About Toronto General Hospital

Toronto General Hospital is a partner in the University Health Network, along with the Toronto Western Hospital and the Princess Margaret Hospital. University Health Network is affiliated with the University of Toronto. Building on the strengths and reputations of each of these remarkable hospitals, the University Health Network brings together the talent, resources, technology and skills that make it an international leader in health care, research and teaching. For more information, please visit www.uhn.ca.

About Toronto General & Western Hospital Foundation

Toronto General & Western Hospital Foundation (TG&WH Foundation) at University Health Network (UHN) raises funds for research, education and the enhancement of patient care at Toronto General Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital. TG&WH Foundation and the other UHN partner foundations, the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation and the Arthritis & Autoimmunity Research Centre Foundation, have embarked on a \$400 million fundraising campaign, *Together We Make Life Better*. TG&WH Foundation is committed to raising \$250 million toward this goal. For more information, please visit www.uhn.ca

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Alex Radkewycz: 416-340-3895

Jane Finlayson: 416-340-3804

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