



## **Scientific Progress in Donor Transplantation – June 2014**

**Keeping abreast of the science and innovation that enables successful organ transplantation remains a challenge!**

Last week the annual scientific meeting of the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) was held in Canberra along with the Australasian Transplant Coordinators Association (ATCA) meeting. The aim of this gathering of several hundred scientists, academics, doctors, nurse transplant coordinators and students was to bring together the latest ideas, information and new practices from experts in the area of donation and transplantation to improve patient care.

Experts presented new findings in a range of specialty areas. For example some presenters described evolving scientific exploration to help doctors to improve the care of patients who receive a donor organ transplant. This is the kind of work that has led to Australia's very proud reputation as a world leader in successful transplantation outcomes. Other sessions looked at the best way to transition the medical care of children who have received transplants into their adulthood. This extremely important area of care was presented by Professor Sue McDiarmid from the University of California, a paediatrician who is passionate about ensuring that these young people continue to benefit from the opportunities that organ donation has provided them. The three days of presentations also covered areas such as new transplantation services for Australian

patients including a new children's lung transplantation program in Victoria, and remarkable work in hand transplantation.

Amazing presentations which revealed the progress being made in the science of creating new organs, were given by an international leader in the field, Professor Harald Ott. Professor Ott, from the Harvard Medical School showed that the techniques and scientific understandings of how to create scaffolds for organs to grow from a patient's own cells are progressing rapidly. This suggests that in years to come there may be another way to help the many patients who die without a transplant who are currently dependent on generously donated organs.

The ethical dimensions of these practices were explored including questions about organ allocation and live organ donation. The difficulties, risks and benefits for those involved in these practices were argued. Strategies to improve organ donation performance were presented by Dr Maria Gomez, an international donation expert, who has recently moved to Australia from Spain. Australian ethicist Dr Dominique Martin, from the University of Melbourne posed excellent challenges to health care professionals involved in organ donation and transplantation, to remember that they are at

the ethical frontline and therefore have exceptional responsibilities in the role they play.

*For more information about the TSANZ, go to: [www.tsanz.com.au](http://www.tsanz.com.au)*

*Holly Northam is Assistant Professor at the University of Canberra.*