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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### Put sibling rivalry aside— you never know when you might need a kidney

VANCOUVER – According to BC Transplant, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, if you are in need of a kidney, you're likely to get one from your brother or sister.

Of the 1,133 living donor kidney transplants performed in BC since the start of the program in 1976, 382, or 34%, are donated by siblings. The next highest are parents, spouses, and unrelated individuals (friends, co-workers) each at 16%.

“Living donation is one of the most generous gifts one person can give to another,” says Kevin Falcon, Minister of Health Services. “It’s remarkable to think that more than 1,100 British Columbians have benefited from living donation.”

With fewer organs available from deceased donors—due in large part to increased use of air bags, seatbelts and helmets laws—more emphasis has been placed on the development of living donor programs. Living donation can mean shorter waiting time and excellent outcomes for those needing a kidney transplant.

In January, 2007, James Shinkewski was faced with the sudden onset of kidney failure, and was told he needed a kidney transplant. His brother Jeff didn’t hesitate in his decision to donate. Only two years apart in age, the brothers have always been close, and after testing, Jeff was shown to be an excellent match for James. “My immediate reaction was that I would give a kidney to my brother,” says Jeff. “I was lucky to be in a place in my life where I was financially stable, established in my career with an incredibly supportive employer, and physically fit enough to donate. Everything just fit into place.”

“Traditionally siblings have always been good living donor matches, but we now have similar successful outcomes with unrelated donors,” says Dr. David Landsberg, Director of the Kidney Transplant Program at St. Paul’s Hospital. “In response to a decline in deceased donation and to try and meet the demand for kidney transplant, there was willingness for programs to look at other relationships beyond the family for potential donors.”

Over the past few decades, significant advances have been made in living donation, which has allowed more people to donate. It used to be that living donation was restricted to close family members with a strong genetic link, but with improvements in anti-rejection medications, this is no longer the case, as spouses, friends, and co-workers routinely donate. This trend has continued to increase over the past 10 years.

Surgical procedures have also improved, so that today most kidneys are removed using a minimally invasive technique known as laparoscopy, which results in much less postoperative pain and a significantly earlier return to normal activities than previously possible.

Despite the increase in living donation, hundreds of British Columbians are still waiting for a life-saving transplant. What are you waiting for? Register your decision about organ donation on BC’s Organ Donor Registry. Based on public opinion surveys, 85% of British Columbians said they support organ donation and intend to register their decision, yet just over 17% have done so. To register visit [www.transplant.bc.ca](http://www.transplant.bc.ca) or telephone 1.800.663.6189.

### Living Donor/Recipient Relationship

Relationship	# of donors	% of donors
Sibling	382	34%
Unrelated (friends, co-workers)	183	16%
Parent	182	16%
Spouse	177	16%
Offspring	140	12%
Other related (cousins, aunts, uncles)	69	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,133</b>	

#### About BC Transplant

BC Transplant (BCT), established in 1986, is a comprehensive health care organization responsible for all aspects of organ transplant in British Columbia, including; pre-transplant assessment, organ recovery and donor matching, follow-up care at regional clinics across the province, research and clinical trials, and public education.

Over the past four decades, more than 4,500 British Columbians have received a life-saving organ transplant.