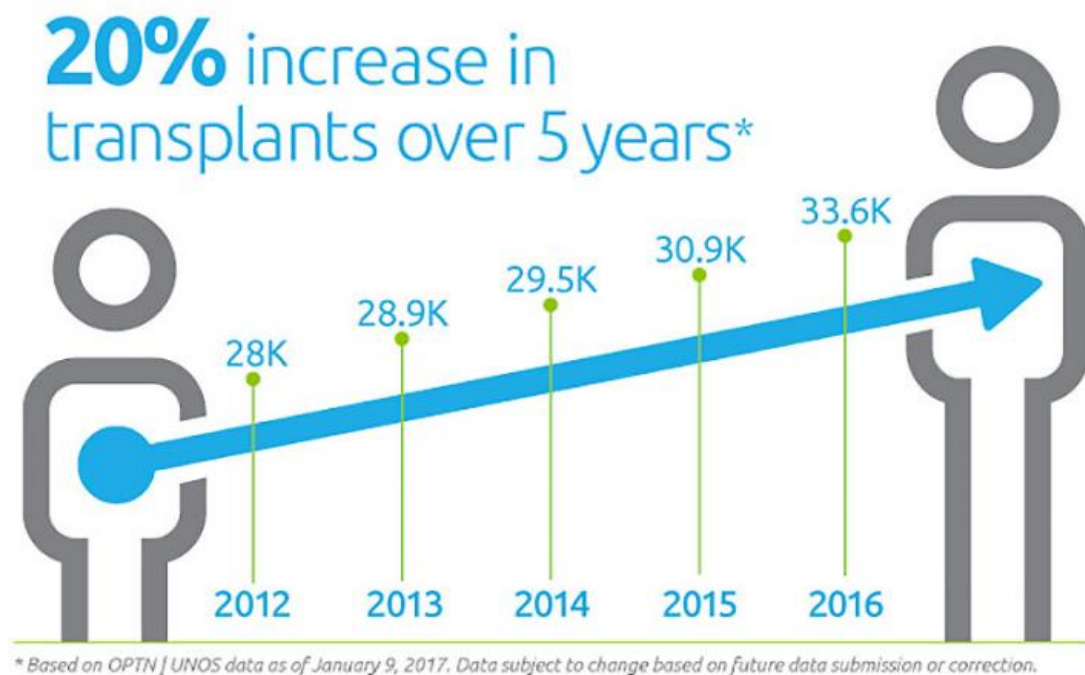


Organ transplants, deceased donors set record in 2016

January 12 2017, by Tyler Greer



Matching organs. Saving lives. 

Credit: University of Alabama at Birmingham

Organ transplants performed at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and across the United States in 2016 reached record highs, according to preliminary data from UAB and the United Network for

Organ Sharing.

UAB performed 385 transplants in 2016—up more than 4 percent from 2015—including a 25 percent jump in the volume of [liver transplants](#) performed at UAB Hospital. UAB's numbers are up in part because of the Alabama Organ Center's record year, which saw 153 [organ donors](#) donate 425 organs upon death—a 24 percent increase from 2015.

Nationwide, 33,606 transplants were reported to UNOS, representing an 8.5 percent increase over the 2015 total, and an increase of 19.8 percent since 2012.

Devin Eckhoff, M.D., director of UAB's Division of Transplantation, part of the Department of Surgery and School of Medicine, says exceeding local and national records is not possible without the selfless decision thousands of people made to become either a living organ donor or an organ donor upon death.

"Truly, these aren't numbers," Eckhoff said. "They are people, and they are people here in Alabama and around the country who physicians have had the privilege of helping return to health, in some cases for the first time in years because of the generosity of another human being. As a transplant surgeon, it's a tremendous honor to help carry on the legacy of those who made a decision to give so others can have a chance to live."

"The Alabama Organ Center has been focused on transforming itself to better meet the needs of the community, and we are seeing the positive results of those efforts," said Chris Meeks, executive director Alabama Organ Center, which became only the eighth procurement organization in the country to open its own in-house recovery center in 2016. "We exceeded the national growth performance in 2016 and are now focusing on continued growth and sustaining our service to our mission. We are grateful to our hospital and community partners that help to make this possible. We are especially humbled by the generous nature of the

residents of Alabama who register their decision to be donors, and to all of the families who support organ, eye and tissue donation."

Today, more than 123,000 candidates are on the national organ transplant waiting list, with nearly 3,200 waiting in Alabama. UAB's transplant program has performed more than 14,000 transplants during the past 50 years. UAB Medicine offers transplant surgery for heart, liver, lung, pancreas and kidneys.

Eckhoff says the UAB's Liver Transplant Program's increase in the volume of transplants by 25 percent from 2015 to 2016 was due to several factors, including UAB's aggressive pursuit of livers that have been turned down at other centers for a variety of reasons.

"We pursue increased-risk donors, for example, where the risk of dying on the transplant list is far greater than the risk these donors may present for the recipients," Eckhoff said. "We also had two donors this past year where the CT scan showed a fatty liver, which is not transplantable. But we will go look at these donors closely, and our experience is that fatty liver is frequently over-diagnosed and, in fact, the livers were normal."

Eckhoff says UAB's liver program hopes to at least sustain its volume and, hopefully, increase it slightly if the current allocation system remains in place.

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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