



A recent nationwide surge in liver transplantation activity reached an historic peak in 2019 when over 8,300 transplants were carried out. The University of Washington (UW) abdominal transplant team was in step with this trend and in 2019 completed 114 transplants, the highest number since 2006. Despite these accomplishments, there has been no demonstrable decrease in wait list mortality at the national level and the path to life-saving liver transplantation remains long, arduous, and uncertain for many patients. UW leadership has responded to this predicament with a reemphasis on the development of its living donor liver transplant (LDLT) program. LDLT is the predominant modality for liver transplantation in many parts of the world, but historically has had limited impact in the United States. Over the last several years, no liver transplant program in the Pacific Northwest has performed an adult-to-adult LDLT but patients and their families have expressed an interest in pursuing its well-known benefits and advantages.

A key component of UW's LDLT program is living liver transplant surgeon, Dr. **Mark Sturdevant**, who was recruited here in February. Dr. Sturdevant, Associate Professor in the Division of Transplant

Surgery, is the newly appointed Surgical Director of the UW Liver Transplant Program and Program Director of LDLT. Prior to joining Department of Surgery faculty, he spent four years at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Center, a highly respected and high-volume LDLT center in Saudi Arabia that performs upwards of 180 LDLTs annually in adults and children. This came after a 5-year tenure at the Starzl Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, which currently has the busiest LDLT program in the nation. With this depth of expertise and technical proficiency, Dr. Sturdevant is well-suited to enhance the longstanding work being done in partial liver graft surgery by Drs. **Jorge Reyes**, Professor & Chief, and **Patrick Healey**, Associate Professor & Section Chief, Pediatric Transplant Surgery, who both have decades of experience in the field of split liver transplantation in adults and children. Dr. **Kiran Bambha**, Associate Professor in the Division of Gastroenterology, Department of Medicine, and medical director of LDLT, brings further experience to the program and will play a pivotal role in optimizing donor and recipient selection, which is a preeminent requisite for the success of any LDLT program. Skilled clinical teams in infectious diseases, social work, psychiatry, and other medical subspecialties, along with ancillary services, are already in place to provide our living liver donors and recipients with comprehensive and thoughtful care.

A robust LDLT program at UW will not only provide an additional, and often superior, option for those with standard indications for transplant, but may also serve as the one viable treatment path for patients often left with little to no recourse in a system which is so heavily influenced by limited deceased

donor availability. Included in this group are high acuity, low-MELD patients along with those burdened with certain malignancies, such as advanced hepatocellular carcinoma, hilar cholangiocarcinoma, and metastatic liver disease (unresectable colorectal and neuroendocrine tumors), who are unlikely to reach a cure without a total hepatectomy and liver transplant. For these, and other unique patient populations, the LDLT program at UW cannot come soon enough. Reaching these patients and their referring providers through outreach and education is or paramount importance as LDLT up to now has not been a tangible option for patients in our region of the country. LDLT recipient candidates and their families will also be empowered on how to advocate on their own behalf by participating in the new UW Living Donor Champion Program. Interested family members will work with a wide array of UW transplant team members to develop the LDLT knowledge base, interpersonal skills, and responsible social media proficiency to reach the willing and eager liver donors who are often found in plain sight.

