



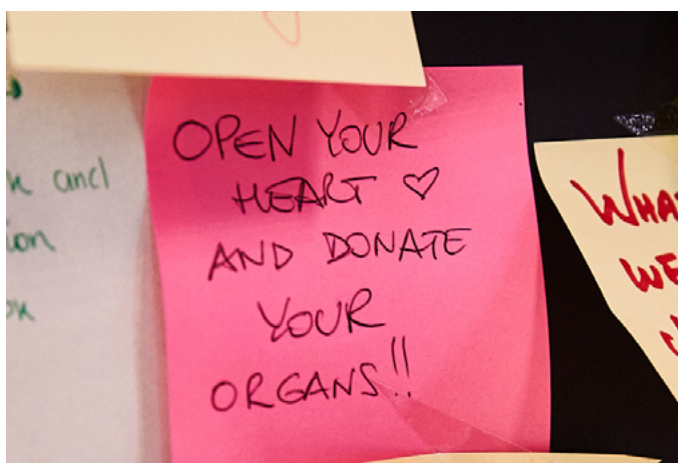
ESOT-ETPO Workshop

WORKSHOP 1: STAYING HEALTHY

18 SEPTEMBER 2023

Workshop 1: Staying healthy

For recipients of life-saving transplants, the path to improved health extends far beyond the moment of donation. It is part of a lifelong journey that begins even before the procedure and continues throughout their lifetime, with positive lifestyle changes, including physical activity, playing a crucial role in their ongoing well-being.



So how can we, as part of the transplant community, work within our existing structures to promote physical activity among recipients and encourage lifelong positive habits?

This was the question up for discussion during the ESOT-ETPO (European Society for Organ Transplantation-European Transplant Patient Organisations) Workshop 1 on Monday, 18 September 2023, aptly titled 'Staying healthy.'

Attended by a diverse range of healthcare professionals and patient advocates, the session aimed to explore the challenges faced by patients in integrating physical activity into their lives and the practical solutions for addressing this.

"It's never too late to re-initiate physical activity into your life."

- Marieke Vandecruys

Overcoming the barriers of a sedentary lifestyle after transplantation

The workshop opened with an insightful presentation by Marieke Vandecruys, a PhD student from KU Leuven, Belgium, who underscored the significant benefits of physical activity within the transplant community, but also the barriers that individuals encounter.

"Transplantation is a life-saving intervention for patients with end-stage organ failure, and over the last few decades, the survival rates have increased thanks to pharmacological and surgical improvements," said Marieke. "However, age standardised mortality remains significantly higher compared with the general population, with this heightened mortality rate mostly attributable to cardiovascular disease. Physical activity is therefore crucial, as it is an important modifiable cardiovascular risk factor."

However, when comparing the level of physical activity of transplant recipients against the World Health Organization's recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week for patients with chronic disorders, Marieke noted that only 55.9% of recipients were achieving these targets. Marieke indicated that these figures may even be an over-estimation, as they were self-reported.

"So, we now know the importance of physical activity and we know that patients are less physically active than we would hope. So, what's the reason for this?" continued Marieke.

To explore this, Marieke highlighted a systematic review conducted by her team encompassing 1933 organ transplant recipients. The study identified six main domains acting as barriers to physical activity: physical, knowledge, environmental, social, emotional and motivational.

She stressed that overcoming these barriers involves a range of proactive and tailored interventions, including personalised exercise programmes, greater education amongst healthcare providers to encourage activity and the creation of physical activity opportunities in a patient's environment and social setting.

Marieke also emphasised the need for larger intervention studies to uncover additional barriers and motivators that could help incorporate physical activity into a patient's daily life, citing an example of her team's upcoming Phoenix study, which will evaluate the effects of exercise training and a physical activity programme in 294 kidney and liver transplant recipients.

Concluding her presentation, Marieke left the attendees with a poignant reminder: "Every small improvement in our physical activity counts and it's never too late to re-initiate physical activity into your life."

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Amplifying the message

The workshop continued with an impactful presentation from Colin White, President of the European Transplant and Dialysis Sports Federation and Treasurer of the World Transplant Games Federation. Colin highlighted the transformative power of physical activity and sports in fostering a sense of community, motivation and hope amongst transplant recipients.

With regards to physical activity, he aimed to show transplant recipients that “yes, your peers are doing it. They’re doing a lot of it. And they’re having a lot of fun doing it.”

Discussing the initiation of the World Transplant Games, Colin emphasised how it began with the knowledge that receiving a transplant was not the end of the journey for patients. “That’s only the start of chapter two of the journey, where we now have to give a reason or motivation to our patients to get out, be active and really embrace that gift of life and second chance.”

Using inspirational real-life stories from participants of all ages, Colin showcased how sporting initiatives, such as the World Transplant Games, do exactly this, serving as compelling proof that people can go on to live an active life after transplantation.

He said, “The people who go to these games become role models. If people see others doing it, they’re seeing the potential out there. It’s reassurance for them. It’s reassurance for their families.”

“We’re powered by the gift of life.”

- Colin White

Importantly, Colin wanted to convey that this motivation wasn’t limited to just 1 week a year when the games took place. He emphasised the array of opportunities available to transplant recipients at various stages of their life and transplant journey, such as Transplant Next, a youth project, and Refit for Life!, designed to support patients as they take their first steps towards physical activities after transplantation.

Throughout his presentation, Colin underscored how the true impact of these initiatives goes beyond physical activity. They are about creating a sense of community, a community who understand the unique experience of being a transplant recipient and are a vital source of encouragement.

In closing, Colin summarised the key takeaway he wanted the audience to have, “The message I’d like to get across is there is a big community out there. We are a big family and we’re powered by the gift of life.”

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