Schuster Family Continues to Help Transplant Patients Through innovative New Clinic at Brigham & Women's Hospital

BOSTON - More than three decades since brothers Mark and Scott Schuster underwent kidney transplant surgery, the Schuster family’s leadership and philanthropy in transplantation and kidney disease continues to benefit transplant patients at Brigham & Women's Hospital.

The Schuster Transplant Center opened its doors in November 2011. This innovative new clinic for kidney and pancreatic transplant patients is designed to support the goal of making every transplant a success that lasts a lifetime. The Schuster Transplant Center provides a single-day, pre-transplant evaluation clinic with multi-disciplinary staff. This approach alleviates the stress of making multiple trips to the hospital, can reduce a patient’s time to transplant listing and provides the structure to support collaboration and communication among caregivers, patients and their families.

"Transplantation does not affect as many people as things like cancer or heart disease," explained Mark Schuster, Principal of Wingate Companies. "but it is an area where making a contribution can be extraordinarily impactful, because there are not as many people making those contributions," said Mark Schuster, principal of Wingate Companies.

When Mark Schuster and younger brother Scott were college students at Tufts University, Scott’s kidneys began to fail from a hereditary problem. What would become a life-long journey in transplantation for the Schuster family began in 1978 with one word - Perfect.

Doctors told Mark that he was a perfect match in blood and tissue types to be a kidney donor for his younger brother Scott, a 21-year old Tufts senior. The brothers underwent the operations at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital on Scott’s winter break from college. Their experience post-transplant was far from perfect, but it gave the entire Schuster family an intricate familiarity with the ups and downs of the procedure—the bouts of rejection, the effects of the immunosuppressant medications, and the renewed quality of life it could ultimately provide the recipient. Since that time, Mark, Scott and their parents, Gerald and Elaine, have sought to make the experience a better one for kidney transplant patients.

In 2004, a gift from Gerald and Elaine Schuster helped to establish the Schuster Family Transplantation Research Center at BWH and Children’s Hospital. Dedicated to enhancing patients’ safety and long-term success, specialists there study transplantation immunobiology and stem cell biology.
Through the years, the Schuster family has donated more than $5 million to Brigham and Women's Hospital, much of which will go to support the hospital's new Schuster Transplant Center and Transplant Research Center.

“This would not have been possible without the vision of the Schusters,” said Stefan G. Tullius, MD, PhD, FACS, co-director of the center.

BWH has been a leader in transplantation since 1954 when the world’s first human organ transplant was performed there. The success of this surgery paved the way for the future of organ transplantation, and surgical advancements have improved outcomes immensely since that time.

“As we have seen improving outcomes immediately following transplantation, our focus has switched to longer term outcomes,” said Anil Chandraker, MD, FASN, FRCP, co-director of the Schuster Transplant Center. “Patients can suffer adverse effects of immunosuppression in the long-term, which can cause infections and increase susceptibility to cancer. Through scientific discovery, we are striving to monitor and modify the effects of immunosuppression to improve outcomes.”

The future of transplantation relies both on advances in science and the incredible generosity of organ donors. Currently, there are more than 112,700 people on the waiting list for organs, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing.

The new clinic is part of the Schuster Family Transplantation Research Center (TRC), a multifaceted group of clinicians and investigators that strives to dramatically improve outcomes for recipients of transplanted organs. Formed in 2004 as a result of a generous gift from the Schuster family, the TRC set an ambitious agenda that has already yielded tangible results. In the laboratory, researchers probe complex processes such as allore cognition and rejection, improvements in surgical technique and drug development. This bedside-to-bench philosophy lies at the core of the Center’s values. The synergistic interactions of physicians and basic researchers from a wide range of specialties and world-renowned teaching hospitals place us in a unique position to spearhead crucial advances in transplantation medicine.