

Mayo Clinic William J. von Liebig

Transplant Center

Fall 2003

Dr. Ruud Krom: Liver Transplant Surgeon Par Excellence



Ruud Krom, M.D., Ph.D., is a liver transplant surgeon, par excellence, a competitive sailor — and a team player. Perhaps that is the key to his success. When he crews on a yacht in the Newport Bermuda Race, Dr. Krom is one member of a high-performance team. In 1985, he was recruited to Mayo Clinic to skipper the liver transplant program — he is a skipper who never forgets the contribution that each team member makes to the team's success.

Building a successful liver transplantation program

Dr. Krom arrived at Mayo with impressive credentials. He completed a transplant surgery fellowship at Colorado Medical Center, Denver, which was led by Thomas Starzl, M.D. — the surgeon who performed the first successful liver transplant in 1963. Dr. Krom came to Mayo from the University Hospital, Groningen, in the Netherlands where he had performed 36 liver transplants and led a highly successful program since 1989.

"The program that Dr. Krom began in Groningen attracted attention because it was a small program with unusually successful results," says Sylvester Sterioff, M.D., a transplant surgeon and longtime friend and colleague of Dr. Krom. "He really brought an excitement to the whole process. He was successful from the very beginning. And his strong belief in the concept of teamwork was a great fit with Mayo because teamwork is our hallmark."

By June 1999, Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. had performed its 1,000th liver transplant. At that time, Mayo was only one of nine medical centers in the United States and one of 15 worldwide to achieve the milestone. It was a significant achievement.

A tumultuous beginning

Dr. Krom was born in Sumatra, an island of the former Dutch East Indies in the Malay Archipelago. When the Japanese overtook the islands from the Dutch during World War II, Dr. Krom's father, also a physician, sent his wife and children off to a safe haven in Australia. However, their boat was forced to return because a port ahead was being bombarded. In 1943, the family was interned in a concentration camp where they remained until the end of the war.

In 1945, the family moved back to Holland and eventually to Deventer, a town where Dr. Krom and his four brothers and sisters were raised.

Medical education

Dr. Krom attended medical school at Holland's University of Utrecht, and completed his residency in general surgery and earned a Ph.D. at the University Hospital of Leiden — also in Holland. His postgraduate research included performing animal liver transplantation. Defending the Ph.D.-thesis in the oldest University in Holland was a special event.

— Continued on page 2

On the inside...

Number of Transplants at Mayo Clinic

— pg. 3

"Waiting for A Transplant"

— pg. 4 & 5

2004 U.S. Transplant Games

— pg. 6

New Toll-Free Numbers

— pg. 7

Dr. Ruud Krom: Liver Transplant Surgeon Par Excellence *(continued)*

"The university was founded in 1575," explains Dr. Krom. "And I defended my thesis in an historical hall, where the walls are hung with imposing portraits of the many great scholars and scientists that have brought fame to Leiden University over the centuries — it was a bit distracting."

Another distraction in Holland must have been sailing — a commonplace passion in a country with a long nautical history.

A passion for sailing; a love of family

Dr. Krom sailed in the Newport Bermuda Race five years in a row and sees parallels between competitive sailing and transplantation surgery.

"When you're confined for five days on a ship in the middle of the ocean, all tired and working hard under extreme conditions, tempers start to get frayed," says Dr. Krom. "Liver transplantations are long surgeries where the team is confined to the operating room for anywhere from four to seven hours. So you need the same skills to keep the team functioning at its best."

Dr. Krom also enjoys sailing for pleasure in the waters surrounding Nantucket, Mass., where he and his wife, Jeannette, have a house. The title Dr. Krom also applies to Jeannette, an anesthesiologist who has never practiced in the United States. When in the first year after moving to the United States she became pregnant, she decided to stay at home and enjoy raising their son, RJ. RJ is now an outstanding high school senior and a cellist with the South East Minnesota Youth Orchestra. He began cello lessons at the age of five and his father joined him in his cello lessons.

"I wanted to be his role model in daily practice but only did it until RJ was tall enough to play a full-sized cello," quips Dr. Krom. "By that time I'd gone as far as I could go."

Crowning a prestigious career

Dr. Krom is co-editor of *Liver Transplantation*, along with Russell Wiesner, M.D., a Mayo hepatologist, former medical director of liver transplantation and current president of UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing). In their hands, the journal has become a respected clinical and basic science publication.

In June 2003, Dr. Krom was honored by the International Liver Transplantation Society in recognition of outstanding contributions to the field of transplantation. Dr. Krom is justifiably proud of an award bestowed on him by his national and international peers.

Mayo is fortunate to have benefited from Dr. Krom's many talents.

"It is Dr. Krom's leadership that made our liver transplantation program one of the most successful in the world," says Christopher McGregor, M.D., director of the Transplant Center. "Really, that says it all."

Transplant Center Newsletter

Mark Stegall, M.D.
Medical Consultant

Allison Allen
Communications Consultant

Yvonne Hubmayr
Freelance Writer

Monica Young
Graphic Designer

Editorial Board:

**Charise Bauer, Ellen Case, Joan Meyer,
Jayne Oles, Kathy Schwab, Sandy
Schwartz, Michelle Skaar**

Mayo Clinic has offered transplantation as a treatment option for adult and pediatric patients since 1963. Mayo organ transplant programs have earned worldwide recognition for their expertise and success. In 1998 the separate organ and tissue transplant efforts united under the umbrella of the Mayo Transplant Center. This cooperation enhances the ability of Mayo physicians and scientists to share expertise and resources, offer comprehensive integrated transplant services, and to conduct innovative research in transplantation.



For More Information...

For more information on Mayo
Clinic's William J. von Liebig
Transplant Center, visit us online at:

www.mayoclinic.org/transplantcenter-rst/

A Commitment to patient safety

The Mayo Clinic transplant program, with locations in three states, is the biggest transplant practice in the United States. Last year, more than 1,000 transplants were performed at Mayo Clinic.

“Patient safety is of utmost concern to us,” says Christopher McGregor, M.D., director of the Mayo Clinic William J. von Liebig Transplant Center, “and we continue to review policies that provide safeguards for our patients.”

- **OPTN/UNOS** — the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) operates the government-contracted, nationwide Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN).
- **LifeSource** — the nonprofit, federally designated organ procurement organization for Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of western Wisconsin.
- **Mayo Clinic** institutional patient safety policies.

Mayo Clinic re-emphasizes patient safety

Updated policies have been adapted at Mayo based upon the following three principles:

1. Clear designation of responsibility for checking ABO incompatibility at each stage of the transplantation process.
2. Two individuals agreeing on ABO compatibility at critical junctures in the process.
3. Minimizing transcription errors by limiting the number of places where data is stored.

“In consultation with all three of our group practices, with leaders from each of our programs, and with Mayo Clinic Blood Bank, we have reviewed and updated policies to further improve our system,” says Dr. McGregor. “We believe that the reviewed policies provide powerful safeguards to avoid incidents occurring at Mayo.”

Number of Transplants Performed at Mayo Clinic from July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002

	Mayo Clinic Rochester, Minn.	Mayo Clinic Jacksonville, Fla.	Mayo Clinic Scottsdale, Ariz.	Mayo Clinic Total
Liver	88	175	40	303
Kidney	222	59	56	337
Kidney-Pancreas	6	8	0	14
Pancreas	39	3	0	42
Heart	13	6	0	19
Lung	6	14	0	20
Bone Marrow	252	30	0	282
TOTAL	626	295	96	1,017

Waiting for a Transplant



Kelvin Heath, age 49, waited two years for his pancreas transplant. It was a difficult time and included the roller-coaster emotional ride of a failed first transplant. But nine weeks after surgery, Heath, a surgical nurse at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., was back at work full-time, feeling on top of the world — and feeling that the wait had been worth it.

Complications of type 1 diabetes

Heath was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was 8 years old. Formerly called “juvenile diabetes,” type 1 diabetes occurs when the body’s immune system destroys the cells within the pancreas — they are the cells that produce insulin.

Heath had been dependent on insulin injections since his diagnosis. In 1999, he had two episodes of life-endangering hypoglycemia or low blood sugar.

“Severe hypoglycemia can cause mental confusion and total incapacitation,” explains Heath. “In my case, I was in such a haze that I was dangerous to myself and to others. On the second occasion I was driving and had an accident.”

Heath was unable to recognize the onset of hypoglycemia after living with diabetes for 40 years. He worked with Mayo Clinic endocrinologist, Frank Kennedy, M.D., to implement new strategies such as more frequent blood glucose monitoring and changes in his insulin therapy program. But they did not help him safely recognize when his blood sugar levels were severely low, and his wife, Maggie and their son, Ryan, age 9, were afraid for

his life every time he left the house. That’s when Dr. Kennedy suggested Heath consider a pancreas transplant.

“I was listed Dec. 9, 1999, and had my first transplant in November 2001,” says Heath. “Unfortunately it clotted off and had to be removed. That was hard but it wasn’t as though I had no other treatment options. It just meant going back on insulin — and back on the waiting list.”

When *will* that phone call come?

Heath’s wait was not so long the second time. In February 2002 he had just returned to work full-time and was in the middle of a night shift when he got the call.

No one has control over when the call will come. So how do you make yourself ready to have surgery at any moment of the day, every day, for an indefinite amount of time? Some find it helpful to list the things that bother them if they’re not updated. Then they follow strategies that stop the worrying — such as paying bills as soon as they arrive and having a haircut more often.

“Being on the waiting list for so long is very hard on the family too,” says Heath. “For myself, I found it helpful to focus on staying as fit as possible by exercising and eating healthily. And for all of us it was important to try to live a regular life.”

Trying to lead a regular life means doing things you love — even if you have to make modifications such as going to a movie with your oxygen and wheelchair, or watching your grandchild play in Little League from a parked car.

Waiting for a Transplant *(continued)*

Making the most of available resources

Friends and family

Friends and family are an obvious and very important source of support for anyone with a serious illness. They can help with physical tasks besides doing what those who care about you do best – being there to listen.

Mayo Clinic

Transplant Support Groups hold regular meetings — contact your Mayo Clinic social worker for more information.

Spiritual resources

On those days when the wait seems unbearable, you may find strength by exploring your spiritual or philosophical beliefs.

TRIO

The Transplant Recipient International Organization (TRIO) organizes support groups run by individuals who have undergone transplant surgery.

The Rochester chapter meets the first Tuesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Rochester Methodist Hospital Employee Dining Room 1.

To see if there is a chapter in your area, call the International Office at 800-TRIO-386 or visit their Web site at www.trioweb.org. Or use the same avenues to participate in TRIO's "Lend A Helping Ear" program. The program matches people who are willing to listen and share experiences with those who need to speak to someone.

The Internet

Kelvin Heath turned to the Internet for additional comfort — and it proved to be a wonderful tool for accessing a large group of people in similar circumstances.

"I found an Internet support group specifically for people in some stage of the kidney or pancreas transplant process," says Heath. "We use it for everything from exploring medical questions, to venting our frustrations over the waiting period. We even set up some meetings of the group."

Feelings of guilt


Many people who are waiting for transplant from a deceased organ donor are plagued with guilty feelings because their chance of recovering health depends upon someone else losing their life. If these feelings become unbearable, it might help to remind yourself that you have no control over, or responsibility for, your future donor's demise. And many families find solace from knowing that their loved one's death brought the gift of life to someone else.

Hope for the best, prepare for the worst

People waiting for a vital organ are forced to face the possibility of dying at some point during the transplant process. Some people obsess over this difficult issue, others deny the possibility. Many transplant survivors say the best approach is to discuss it. First reassure your family that you remain optimistic about regaining your health. Then explain that your mind will be eased by an open discussion about funeral arrangements, your will, or other nagging details that need your attention. This approach can free your mind enough to focus on doing what you can to stay as healthy as possible.

Kelvin Heath has some final advice for those of you who are waiting for that all-important phone call.

***"Don't stew over it," he warns.
"Get as busy as you can and
stay that way."***



2003 Summer Transplant Picnic

The 2003 Summer Transplant Picnic was a resounding success. The picnic provides an opportunity for all transplant patients and their families to gather together and celebrate the wonderful gifts they have been given. The event is a long-standing tradition: the first picnic began with liver transplant patients in 1987. This year's picnic was held on July 12 at Essex Park in Rochester, Minn., and over 300 people attended.



2004 Transplant Games

The 2004 U.S. Transplant Games will be held at the University of Minnesota from July 27 – Aug. 1, 2004. The U.S. Transplant Games are the largest sporting event in the world for people who have received organ transplants. Mayo Clinic transplant patients are encouraged to get involved. Events include cycling, golf, swimming, racquetball, table tennis, 3-on-3 basketball, track and field, tennis, badminton, bowling, volleyball, and a 5k race. Further information is available at http://www.ahc.umn.edu/ahc_content/Transplant_Games/index.cfm. To join a Mayo Clinic team, contact Kathy Schwab at 507-266-2795 or schwab.kathy@mayo.edu.



UNOS and LifeSource Board Members from Mayo Clinic

A number of Mayo Clinic employees are members of the Board of Directors of UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing). UNOS manages the nation's organ transplant system under contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Under that contract, UNOS brings together medical professionals, transplant recipients and donor families to develop organ transplantation policy.

Mayo is also well represented at LifeSource, Upper Midwest Organ Procurement Organization, Inc. LifeSource is the sole organization, selected by the federal government, which manages all organ donation activities for Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of western Wisconsin.

UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing) Board of Directors members from Mayo Clinic

Russell Wiesner, M.D.

UNOS President

Jacqueline Johnson, M.S.W.

Minority Professional Representative

Lynn Pearson, R.N.

Member At Large Liver/Intestine Transplantation Committee

Timothy Larson, M.D.

Region 7 Representative and member of Kidney Pancreas Transplantation Committee

Mark Stegall, M.D.

Member of Region 7 Kidney Pancreas Transplantation Committee, Chair, Minimum Donor Acceptance Criteria Subcommittee

Michael Ishitani, M.D.

Region 7 Representative

James Dilling

At-large member of the UNOS Administrators Committee

LifeSource

Board of Directors members from Mayo Clinic

Richard Daly, M.D.

Immediate Past President and member of the Executive Committee

Charles Rosen, M.D.

Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee

Scott Nyberg, M.D., Ph.D.

Member

Mark Stegall, M.D.

Member

Jacqueline Johnson

Region 7 Minority Affairs Committee

New Transplant Center Toll-Free Numbers

The Transplant Center has new automated toll-free numbers. Below is a list of numbers you can clip and save for future reference.

Toll-Free Numbers by Program

- Cardiothoracic Transplant Program
800-422-6296
- Kidney/Pancreas Transplant Program
866-249-1648
- Liver Transplant Program
866-227-7501

Automated Options

- **Option 1** – Will allow you to speak with a representative who will assist you.

- **Option 2** – Will allow you to speak with an appointment coordinator who will assist you with scheduling an appointment, confirmation of an appointment or any other scheduling questions you may have. Please have your Mayo Clinic patient number available.
- **Option 3** – Will allow you to request mail-in kits to be sent to you. Please have your Mayo Clinic number available, the type of kit you are requesting, and how often you have your blood drawn so we do not send you kits that will expire prior to being used. Prior to calling, please check to ensure you do not have mail-in kits that are older than one year, as they will not be able to process accurately and will need to be redrawn.



200 First Street SW
Rochester, Minnesota 55905
www.mayoclinic.org

MC4221-02rev0903