The evolution of National Minority Donor Awareness Month
by Dr. Clive O. Callender

The National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program (MOTTEP) was conceptualized in 1991 and this year (2022) represents 31 years since its origin. Its mission was to reduce the number and rate of ethnic minority Americans needing organ and tissue transplants. Since then, MOTTEP has played a major role in doubling minority organ donation rates and quadrupling African American donor rates. One of its byproducts is the National Minority Awareness Month (NMAM). This designation began in 1996, 26 years ago as National Minority Donor Awareness Day (NMDAD) with a proclamation signed by the U.S. Senate on July 10, 1996, with Co-Chairs Bill Frist and Joe Moadley. In the District of Columbia, Mayor Anthony Williams signed it on August 1, 1996. Its goal was to increase the number of minorities who donate, and receive Organ and Tissue transplants, and to decrease the need for transplantation by the adoption of healthy lifestyles. Minorities at that time made up 30% of the American population yet accounted for 60% of those needing transplant organs. Because of the donor recipient disparity (100,000 waiting, 30,000 transplants being performed) 22 patients died daily because of the donor shortage. NMDAD was launched in Chicago, Illinois August 1st, 1996. In 2012, the Association of Multicultural Affairs in Transplantation (AMAT) and the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) requested MOTTEP to increase the observance from one day to one-week, hence the National Minority Donor Awareness Week (NMDAW). In August of 2020, representatives from Donate Life America, MOTTEP, and AMAT, met and decided to come together to create the National Multicultural Action Group and to increase NMDAW to one month, established as National Minority Donor Awareness Month (NMDAM). This was done to maximize all efforts to reach more minorities by broadening its out-reach. Over the next 2 years, the group grew from the 3 original organizations to 11, with an increased outreach to Eye and Tissue Associations. The goal remains the same - to bring heightened awareness to donation and transplantation in multicultural communities.

CareDx Joins Forces with MOTTEP
To Increase Organ Donations for Minority Transplant Patients and Support High-Risk, Underserved Communities

CareDx, Inc. – The Transplant Company™ focused on the discovery, development, and commercialization of clinically differentiated, high-value healthcare solutions for transplant patients and caregivers – announced its partnership with MOTTEP (Minority Organ Tissue Transplant and Education Program) to help advance its mission of increasing the number of minority-donated organs and greater adoption of disease prevention behaviors which reduce the incidence of end-stage disease and the need for organ transplantation in high-risk, underserved communities.

“CareDx and MOTTEP share a focused dedication to transplant patient care, and we are honored to partner with them to improve health equity for all transplant patients,” said Reg Seeto, CEO and President of CareDx. “We hope our sponsorship will lead to more...”
early six years after his devastating accident, Robert Chelsea got a call in July 2019 that there was a facial donor available. According to the hospital, Robert’s wait for a donor was longer than the previous Brigham face transplant recipients, due to the effort to find a match that would work for Chelsea’s skin tone. After 16 hours in surgery, Robert had a new face. At the age of 68 years, he’s the oldest person to undergo the surgery as well.

According to Mr. Chelsea, “I’m glad to experience groundbreaking transplant technology and grateful to God for allowing me to see His wonders unfold”.

Approximately 4 years ago, he founded the Robert Chelsea Foundation to raise awareness and participation of organ and tissue donors. He continues to be a strong advocate for donation and has had multiple appearances to share his story of hope, survival and overcoming adversities.

National MOTTEP in conjunction with Donate Life America featured Mr. Robert Chelsea during an educational Webinar in 2021. To view this webinar, please visit https://www.facebook.com/DonateLife/videos/385455499897393.

As a child, Arianne Callender, ran around the Howard University Transplant Center that her father, Dr. Clive Callender, founded and poured all his energies and talents into. She saw the creation of MOTTEP, a vision she said, where “he appeared to manifest through sheer will, clarity of spirit and indefatigable commitment to health and access to care for minority communities, organ transplantation, and health education.” As Arianne grew into her practice as a health care lawyer, she often worked closely with her father on a volunteer basis on MOTTEP initiatives, such as the telehealth program and contributions to Obama-led White House health education efforts.

Since 2011, Arianne has supported MOTTEP as an advisor and participant on the Board. Despite facing many challenges, MOTTEP continued to support and unify its sites across the country, garner continued interest and support across the transplant community, and see frequent coverage in the press of MOTTEP’s, our sites, and her father’s efforts to further transplant education worldwide.

In speaking about MOTTEP’s recent board accomplishments, she noted, “In 2022, we adjusted to the realities of the pandemic, successfully hosting the MOTTEP Gala virtually for the first time.” She went on, “it was so inspiring to hear from our sites and patient community, which always bring us energy and serve as our true north.”

“This year, I have taken on a new role as the Board Vice President,” Arianne remarked, “It is an honor to be able to support MOTTEP, our sites and our communities in this way. In the words of my dad, ever tilting at windmills, let’s together continue to “dream the impossible dream!”

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Dr. Frederick G. Sampson II, one of my spiritual fathers, gave me a bible, with the following inscription, “Remonia – From a Soul of Love to A Joyous Heart – One who finds fulfillment in sharing, caring, and bearing others’ burdens.” I have been blessed to share the beauty, blessings, and even the burdens of the mystery, message and miracle of how we extend lives through organ donation.

The National MOTTEP, partnered with Gift of Life Michigan (formerly, the Transplantation Society of Michigan) in 1995 to serve African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and Arab American communities. I joined the team in 1997, excited as I started this new career that brought the three areas of my life together, medicine, ministry, and education.

Our first major event would be our LIFE Walk/Run - now in its 25th year. to this day, it is the largest event in Michigan promoting organ and tissue donation. It began as a way to engage the community in disease prevention, and organ/tissue donation for National Minority Donor Awareness Day.

I am proud to say MOTTEP has numerous signature events - the Kountz/Callender/Drew Transplant symposium, in its 12th year, our Lifesavers Leadership Breakfast, Sounds of Saving Lives Concert, MOTTEP Moments, Public Health Roundtables, Sounds of Saving Lives and an inaugural Silver Night Under the Stars celebrating our 25 years of serving the metropolitan Detroit, and Michigan communities. These are the events, but the lives we touch as an organization and those who have touched me personally as well. Each interaction has left fingerprints on my spirit that are interwoven into the DNA of who I am.

There have been numerous moments of excitement, but one I must mention is the honor and privilege I had to serve as president of AMAT, and to see National Minority Donor Awareness Day expand from a day to a week, and now a month! National Minority Donor Awareness Month is now promoted by a collaboration of all transplant partners under the umbrella of the National Multicultural Action Group. I was honored to be the co-recipient of the inaugural Clive Callender, MD Circle of Excellence Award along with Bobby Howard.

As I reflect on these 25 years, I hope that I have poured into others, as I have been poured into. I pray that those who come behind me will find the path a little smoother, the opportunities a little higher, and the rewards much greater than the obstacles they may face.

Though I did not understand the path when I started, I am grateful for the journey of personal and professional growth. I have always said that this was not a job, but a ministry. That vision came to fruition as I received my Doctor of Ministry which focused on faith and the “gift of life.” Howard Thurman, one of my favorite theologians said, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”
Down:
1. The type of donation where the donor gives to a specific recipient for transplant.
2. The most frequently donated organ
3. Donation of this tissue makes sight possible
4. Child actor in the sitcom Diff’rent Strokes who received a kidney transplant
5. A symptom to watch for in liver disease
6. An organ that can be donated
7. Laparoscopic _______ is a minimally-invasive surgical procedure to remove a kidney
8. Known as the Father of Transplantation.
9. More than 5,700 living-organ donations are reported each year in the _______ States

Across:
5. Organ _______ is consistent with the beliefs of most major religions
7. The ability to save a life is with _____
8. This Modern Family who has kidney dysplasia has had a kidney transplant.
9. The first living-donor _______ transplant was performed in 1989
12. Living donors _______ lives,
13. A 25-time Grammy winner legendary singer-songwriter got a kidney transplant
14. First Black female transplant surgeon
16. Kidney disease can be reversed if it is _______ early