



Celebrating **30** YEARS of Saving Lives

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NJ Sharing Network Announces Launch of New Personalized Transplant Medicine Institute**

*First Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) exploring  
regenerative medicine to save more lives*

**New Providence, October 4, 2017** – In what represents a significant advancement in organ and tissue transplantation, NJ Sharing Network announces the launch of a new Personalized Transplant Medicine Institute (PTMI), which will be dedicated to the research and development of innovations aimed at increasing the number of successful organ and bone marrow transplants performed each year. The PTMI's multifaceted approach will include personalized genomics, assay development, living kidney donation and regenerative medicine, all of which will transform transplantology as it is known today.

"We are at a tipping point in transplant medicine and the PTMI is moving the science of organ and tissue donation forward. What once was considered a dream can now be a reality," says Joe Roth, President and CEO, NJ Sharing Network. "We touch thousands of lives each year. These new practices will enable us to exponentially increase that number."

NJ Sharing Network started planning the PTMI in 2011 when the research team created a new, enhanced test that could determine whether a transplant would be safe and successful. "The test - known as the NJSN assay - allows us to identify the factors in a recipient's blood that are reacting to the donor cells in a crossmatch test. Occasionally, factors that are not harmful in a transplant situation may cause a crossmatch to be unacceptable, eliminating the chance to move forward with the transplant. The NJSN Assay will save lives that, up to now, other crossmatch methods could not," says Dr. Prakash Rao, Vice President of Diagnostics & Research Operations and Director of Transplant Laboratory, who will lead this initiative.

NJ Sharing Network has also identified multiple genes that can help predict if a patient will begin to reject a transplanted organ. This information may provide physicians with more time to intervene if necessary. Additional gene panels can also predict graft organ viability. With over 120,000 people waiting for a transplant, evaluating the organs for their suitability for transplant is paramount. The more organs deemed suitable for transplant, the more lives that can be saved.

In 2014, NJ Sharing Network took a huge leap forward by becoming the first Organ Procurement Organization to start a Regenerative Medicine Program. Since that time, the organization has successfully procured, isolated and grown "adult" stem cells from

research-consented deceased donors. NJ Sharing Network has also successfully decellularized organs that were not suitable for transplant, creating “scaffolds” for stem cell seeding.

“Our research suggests that deceased donor stem cells could potentially be a viable alternative to living donor stem cells, which require an invasive recovery procedure,” said Dr. Rao. “This would be a first step toward being able to provide an additional and potentially more affordable option for patients awaiting therapies currently limited by the availability of living donor stem cells. This research would also provide yet another way for organ and tissue donors to save lives.”

Future plans for the PTMI also include a program for living donation. Working closely with their existing transplant programs, NJ Sharing Network believes they can increase the number of living kidney donors. Kidneys are the most commonly transplanted organ—and the most in demand.

The PTMI opens the door for further collaboration with organizations and individuals with a shared mission. As the project develops, NJ Sharing Network will be seeking partners to help advance this life-saving work.

NJ Sharing Network saves lives through organ and tissue donation. Located in New Providence, the organization recovers organs and tissue and belongs to a national network that helps the 120,000 people waiting for a transplant. In 2016, more lives were saved than ever before. Thanks to the selflessness of New Jersey organ donors and their families who said yes to donation last year, 613 people are alive today. An additional 161 lives were saved by living donation, 89 lives from out-of-state organ donors and 127 lives from bone marrow transplants coordinated by NJ Sharing Network’s transplant

laboratory. This year, the organization is celebrating 30 years of saving lives.

To learn more, get involved and register as an organ and tissue donor, visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).