

LINDA LEWIS

HEART TRANSPLANT AT UPMC

The Path to the UPMC Heart Transplant Program

In the 1980s, Linda was diagnosed with a heart valve issue following the birth of her daughter. While being closely monitored by a cardiologist, Linda went on with her life. Linda was a dedicated employee of the Pittsburgh Board of Education for 30 years and helped supply every school in the city with food.

It wasn't until February 2020 that Linda's health declined. She began to feel exhausted at her job and had difficulty walking.

"I was really sick and knew something was wrong," says Linda. "I couldn't walk more than a foot and had trouble breathing. At the same time, my husband was very sick and needed to be in a nursing home. I delayed my care so that I could help him."

When Linda came to the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute, she underwent surgery in March 2020 to repair her valve, but the leak in her valve recurred. Later that year, Linda underwent another procedure to have a mechanical valve put in. After this procedure, her heart function continued to worsen, and the team referred Linda to the UPMC Heart Transplant Program to be evaluated for a heart transplant.



The Solution: A New Heart

On Feb. 2, 2021, Linda was admitted to UPMC Presbyterian to be monitored by the team until a donor heart was ready for her. She received a call on Feb. 13 that they found a heart for her.

"I was in the hospital with my sister, Lorene, when I got the call," says Linda. "I remember they told me 'Ms. Lewis, we have good news – we found you a new heart' and I was so thankful."

On Valentine's Day, Linda received her new heart.

"So many people sent their love and blessings," says Linda. "I prayed every day and thanked God for the support. I called my husband a few days after the procedure and told him I had a new heart. He was so happy."

Linda's Recovery

Linda's recovery process required unique care, as she was a recipient of a heart from a hepatitis C-positive organ donor. She began a 10-week course of treatment after her transplant to treat the virus and ensure the new organ was healthy. Now that hepatitis C can be treated, it expands the donor pool and increases the number of hearts available for those in need of a transplant.

About a month into her recovery, Linda faced another heartbreaking challenge.

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FOR ANYONE WHO NEEDS ANY TYPE OF HEART TRANSPLANT OR PROCEDURE – DON'T GIVE UP. BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART AND YOU WILL MAKE IT. TRUST IN YOUR TEAM.

— Linda Lewis

“My husband passed away in March,” says Linda. “It felt like my heart broke. I’m so thankful in God’s timing, that he was able to stay around to make sure I was okay after my procedure.”

Linda’s team of doctors and her support system were there for her every step of the way during this difficult time.

“My team of doctors and nurses were beautiful,” says Linda. “Lorene was there to care for me after my surgery as well. It’s a long road to recovery, but after you pass the one-year mark, everything falls into place. Right now, I’m back to regular activities and feel so good. I can breathe again.”

Linda’s treatment and results may not be representative of similar cases.

Heart Transplant Evaluation Clinics at UPMC

At UPMC, our experts take a collaborative approach to providing patients with advanced treatment options and support at every stage of their transplant journey. This includes diagnosis, pre-evaluation, transplant, and post-transplant care. Our evaluation clinics at UPMC Passavant and UPMC Harrisburg provide pre-transplant and ventricular assist device (VAD) testing for those with advanced heart failure or heart disease.

If a patient is deemed a candidate for surgery, our teams will work together to create a seamless transition of care between the localized evaluation and prospective transplant or VAD procedure at UPMC Presbyterian. Increasing access to advanced heart failure services is key in achieving our goal to provide life-saving care to all patients who will benefit.

Why Choose UPMC?

If you have heart disease, trust the experts from one of the most recognized and experienced heart transplant centers in the country. At UPMC, we provide transplant options to all patients who will benefit. Our program has performed more than 1,700 adult heart transplants and is reported by the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) as the national leader in 90-day survival rates following heart transplantation.

The heart transplant team takes on some of the most complex cases, including patients in need of multi-organ transplant or requiring a bloodless transplant.

Additionally, UPMC was the first medical center to discharge a patient with a VAD in 1990. Since then, UPMC doctors have implanted more than 1,300 VADs, improved existing VADs, and designed new devices to increase survival rates and enhance the lives of those waiting for a transplant.

UPMC is home to one of the oldest and largest transplant programs in the country. We take pride in keeping the lines of communication open with patients, families, referring providers, and transplant case managers throughout the entire transplant journey. Although transplantation is a complex, serious procedure, we maintain a personal, patient-focused approach that takes into consideration the stress and concerns many individuals experience.

Our Locations

UPMC Presbyterian
200 Lothrop St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

EVALUATION CLINICS

UPMC Passavant - McCandless
9100 Babcock Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

UPMC Harrisburg Advanced Heart Failure Center
111. S. Front St.
Harrisburg, PA 17101

For more information about heart transplant, please visit [UPMC.com/HeartTransplant](https://www.upmc.com/HeartTransplant).