

TRANSPLANT NEWS

COURTESY OF
TRANSPLANT SERVICES AT UPMC HARRISBURG

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DID YOU KNOW?

Are you on dialysis and/or a kidney transplant recipient? You may be eligible for **Pennsylvania's Chronic Renal Disease Program (CRDP)**, a state-funded program for people with end-stage renal disease.

By **Tabitha Semancik, MSW, LSW**,
UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Services

If you meet the criteria below, CRDP can be used as a last resort to help with the cost of renal-related care. Coverage is typically good for up to one year after approval and must be renewed annually. We encourage you to explore this valuable resource as a way to help cover the cost of immunosuppression medicines.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for CRDP funding, you must:

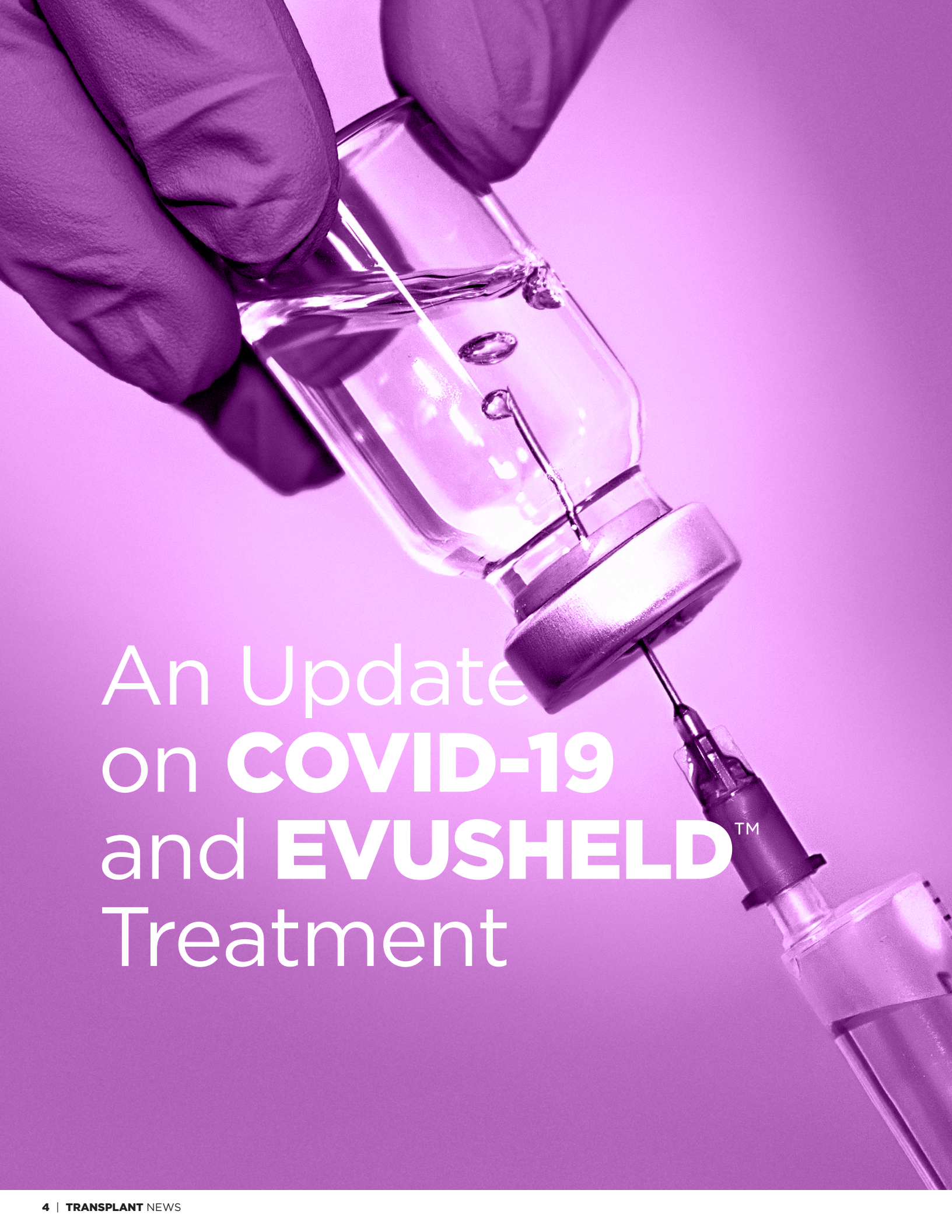
- Be a U.S. citizen or legal alien;
- Be a Pennsylvania resident;
- Have end-stage renal disease; and
- Have a household income at or below 300% of the federal poverty income guidelines (varies year to year).

CONTACT US

For more information, contact CRDP at **1-800-225-7223** or talk to your dialysis or transplant social worker.

For more detailed eligibility information, visit:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Chronic-Renal-Disease>



An Update
on **COVID-19**
and **EVUSHELD**TM
Treatment

By **William Hoffman, MD**,
Transplant Nephrologist, UPMC Harrisburg

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March 2020 and has resulted in more than a million deaths in the United States and many more illnesses. Many more have experienced serious illness and complications. COVID-19 vaccines became available in late 2020 and they remain our best way to prevent severe illness and hospitalizations.

Transplant recipients require immunosuppression medications after transplant. These medicines are meant to prevent antibodies (proteins that immune cells make to typically help fight infection) and reactive immune cells from forming against the transplant. If and when antibodies or immune cells do form against the kidney and cause damage, that is known as rejection. The typical treatment for rejection is to give additional immunosuppression.

Immunosuppression medications help to prevent rejection. But they also make it more difficult to form antibodies and immune responses to infections and vaccines (decreased vaccine response). This is why immunosuppression medications increase the risk of viral and bacterial infections. While this is true, transplant and other medical societies strongly recommend that transplant patients receive COVID-19 vaccines to reduce the risk of severe illness from COVID.

A new monoclonal antibody medicine was approved in December 2021 as a prophylaxis against COVID-19. It is called EVUSHELD (tixagevimab co-packaged with cilgavimab). Monoclonal means that it has many copies of the same antibody typically made through lab techniques. Prophylaxis means that it helps to prevent, rather than treat, a disease. EVUSHELD is an antibody that protects against COVID-19. It's just like the antibodies your immune system would make following vaccination.

EVUSHELD was approved based on trials that showed it helped to prevent symptomatic COVID infection. An ongoing trial is being conducted that randomizes nearly 3,500 participants to receive EVUSHELD, and 1,737 participants to receive the placebo. Six-month outcomes data show a greater than 80% reduction in COVID infections in those who received EVUSHELD. The antibody also was very well tolerated with adverse event rates similar to those in the placebo group, most commonly injection site reaction.

At UPMC Harrisburg, we started giving EVUSHELD to immunosuppressed patients in spring 2022. It does take some planning to receive. **For scheduling purposes, we ask patients to let us know in advance if they want to receive EVUSHELD.** In June 2022, Emergency Use Authorization was modified to allow for a repeat dose of EVUSHELD six months after the initial dose. We plan to offer this second dose as scheduling allows.

As we head into fall, vaccination against COVID-19 is still strongly recommended for transplant patients. We also advise getting EVUSHELD. Recommendations regarding COVID-19 continue to evolve. There are also newer treatments available for COVID-19 infection. Patients should contact our office **before receiving these treatments.** There is a risk some may interact with your other transplant medicines.

FOR INFORMATION about possible reactions with your transplant medicines, or to schedule your dose of EVUSHELD, call **717-231-8700**.



FINANCIAL HELP FOR LIVING KIDNEY DONORS

By **Amy Zook, MSW**, Living Donor Social Worker,
UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Services

There are two organizations that offer **valuable financial assistance to qualifying living kidney donors**. Our staff is here to help you connect with them!

National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC)

NLDAC's government grants offer up to \$6,000 for certain expenses during the living-donor kidney transplant process.

They include:

- **Travel-related expenses** – Transportation, mileage, food, and hotel stays.
- **Lost wages** – Money a living donor would have earned from employment if they had not missed work during the donation process.
- **Dependent care** – Money a living donor would need for expenses to care for children, a disabled adult, or an elderly person because of their donation.

Applications must be completed by living kidney donors and their organ recipients to determine eligibility. Our office can help send your application to NLDAC for review.

Donor Shield

Donor Shield is a program of the National Kidney Registry. It protects employed living donors who take part in a kidney paired exchange.

This protection includes:

- Lost wage reimbursement for donation-related time off work (up to \$2,000 per week for up to six weeks)
- Reimbursement of eligible donation-related travel and lodging costs (up to \$3,000)
- Protection for donation-related complications up to one year after surgery (additional travel and lodging reimbursement up to \$3,000 and lost wage reimbursement of up to \$1,500 per week)
- Free legal support for issues directly related to kidney donation

To connect with the Donor Shield Program, talk first with a UPMC Harrisburg Living Donor coordinator.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about either program, call UPMC Harrisburg Transplant Services at **717-231-8700**.

GET TO KNOW UPMC'S PATIENT PORTAL!

What is the patient portal?

The UPMC Central PA patient portal is a convenient and secure way to access your personal health information. It allows you to:

- Immediately access your latest test results
- View and update your medicines, allergies, immunizations, and health history
- Send and receive messages to and from your doctor's office
- View upcoming appointments
- Find informative patient education

Sign up today!

Visit UPMC.com/CentralPAPortal or ask your doctor's office to send a link to your email.



Meet Our New Staff



SABRINA BLACK, RN, BSN

I've spent three and a half years working in the operating room and now serve as the a posttransplant coordinator. I am very excited to learn and grow in this new career path.

Outside of work, I spend most of my time at the gym or doing activities with friends and family.



KRISTI TAYLOR

I joined the renal transplant team in May as a financial coordinator and have more than 20 years of experience with Pennsylvania's Medicaid programs. I enjoy advocating on behalf of patients who are in need of medical coverage to obtain health care.

When I am not working, I like spending time with my granddaughters, baking, and hiking with my dogs.



KIMBERLY WALLS

I recently joined the UPMC Harrisburg transplant team as an administrative assistant working with pretransplant patients.

My passion is helping others. Knowing that I am making a small difference in starting the process for our patients means the world to me. I have learned so much in such a short amount of time, and I am so happy to be a part of the transplant team at UPMC Harrisburg.

In my free time, I enjoy reading and spending time with my family and friends.



JENNIFER WELKEL, RN, MSN

I love being a nurse! I began my career in the emergency department and moved to an inpatient dialysis unit. Since then, I have worked in all aspects of kidney care — inpatient, outpatient, and home therapy. I've enjoyed my many years helping dialysis patients and their families navigate their disease. In my new role as posttransplant coordinator, I'm excited to begin my journey learning about kidney disease and the transplant process.

Outside of work, I like spending time with my family and friends, scrapbooking, and gardening.



WELCOME MANISH GUPTA, MD

Dr. Gupta earned his medical degree from Temple University School of Medicine Philadelphia and completed his residency at The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He completed his fellowship at University of Cincinnati and The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Dr. Gupta is board-certified by the American Board of Surgery. He is also a member of American Society of Transplant Surgeons and chair of the Medical Advisory and Policy Board for the Gift of Life Donor Program.

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A \$24 billion health care provider and insurer, Pittsburgh-based UPMC is inventing new models of patient-centered, cost-effective, accountable care. The largest nongovernmental employer in Pennsylvania, UPMC integrates more than 92,000 employees, 40 hospitals, 800 doctors' offices and outpatient sites, and a more than 4 million-member Insurance Services Division, the largest medical insurer in western Pennsylvania. In the most recent fiscal year, UPMC contributed \$1.5 billion in benefits to its communities, including more care to the region's most vulnerable citizens than any other health care institution, and paid more than \$900 million in federal, state, and local taxes. Working in close collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences, UPMC shares its clinical, managerial, and technological skills worldwide through its innovation and commercialization arm, UPMC Enterprises, and through UPMC International. *U.S. News* consistently ranks UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside among the nation's best hospitals in many specialties and ranks UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh on its Honor Roll of America's Best Children's Hospitals. For more information, go to UPMC.com.

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