



PRESS RELEASE

24 June 2008

NIKPA 'Lifecycle's to Western Trust

Today, Wednesday 2nd July, the Western Health and Social Care Trust welcome Northern Ireland Kidney Patient Association's (NIKPA) 'Lifecycle' to its Renal Unit in Tyrone County Hospital in Omagh.

The cyclists will leave from Tyrone County Hospital, today, at 10.00am.

The 'Lifecycle' has been pioneered by William Johnston, a home-haemodialysis patient, who has been waiting for a life-saving kidney transplant for more than 10 years. In 1995, William went through a failed transplant and numerous blood transfusions. He also has rogue antibodies circulating in his body, which means it is difficult to find a suitable donor match.

Far from being downhearted, William has shown his determination by being proactive though helping to increase the profile of organ donation through the NIKPA 'Lifecycle'. The 'Lifecycle' is a sponsored tandem cycle ride around the dialysis units of Northern Ireland. William will also be joined on the way by doctors, nurses, transplanted patients, dialysis patients, friends and family.

William, who has been inspired by the late Jane Tomlinson while planning this 'Lifecycle' commented: "The ultimate objective of the 'Lifecycle' is to encourage people to consider Organ Donation and carry the Donor Card. Organ donation can transform the lives of so many people with a real 'Gift of Life'. Through the 'Lifecycle' we hope to encourage people to be 'GLAD – Give Life after Death' to 'carry the Donor Card'. It is important for us to get the message out that through carrying the Donor Card so many lives can be saved and transformed."

He continued: "During my stages of the 'Lifecycle', I will be joined by my cycle partner who is an old school friend who agreed to enter the 'Paired Donorship' Scheme whereby he donates one of his kidneys to a stranger so that I can receive a kidney when one becomes available for. He will be with me every day of the 'Lifecycle', driving the support van whilst I cycle and vice-versa."

Dr Peter Garrett, Lead Consultant with the Renal Unit of the Western Trust added: "Kidney failure is an increasingly common problem in Northern Ireland. When kidney failure becomes too severe to sustain life, renal replacement treatment (dialysis or transplantation) is required."

"Over the last two decades there have been huge advances in both the quality and the accessibility of dialysis treatment. For many patients with end stage renal failure, however, the gold standard treatment is transplantation."

He continued: "The availability of transplants unfortunately is hampered by a lack of donors. With National Transplant week approaching from the 6th-13th July, what NIKPA and William are doing through the 'Lifecycle' is vital to raise the public awareness of Organ Donation. Each participant in the cycle can raise as little or as much sponsorship as they can for vital Renal Patient Care and Research. "

Tyrone County Hospital currently has 86 patients being dialysed within their Renal Unit, including 1 holiday patient. Since opening in 1989, they have had 96 transplants in total, 55 of those in the last 10 years.

Supporting this leg of the 'Lifecycle' from Tyrone County Hospital, to Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry will include: Dominic Kirwan, local entertainer; Peter Canavan, Tyrone footballer, other local Cyclists and Cycling Club members, as well as staff. Representatives from the Western Trust and local councillors including, Seamus Shields, who himself is a kidney transplant recipient will see them off.

To find out more about the NIKPA 'Lifecycle' or on how to donate log on to: www.nikpa.org.

Ends

For further information contact:

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Notes to Editor:

1. The 'Lifecycle' is taking place from the 25th June - 4th July 2008 as a lead in to the National Transplant Week 2008 from the 6th-13th July 2008. During National Transplant Week, if you would like to cover this in more detail contact the Western Trust communications department.
2. The proposed schedule and route is as follows:
 - Wed 25th June: Ulster Hospital to Royal Victoria Hospital for Sick Children & RVH for Sick Children to Antrim Area Hospital
 - Fri 27th June: Antrim Area Hospital to Altnagelvin Area Hospital (Londonderry)
 - Mon 30th June: Altnagelvin Hospital to Tyrone County Hospital (Omagh)
 - Wed 2nd July: Tyrone County Hospital (Omagh) to Daisy Hill Hospital (Newry)
 - Fri 4th July: Daisy Hill Hospital (Newry) to Belfast City Hospital
3. Photo opportunities available on the day with all the individuals and participants in attendance.

