

NEWS RELEASE



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United Health Foundation Launches Series of Clinical Quality Improvement Grants to Medical Specialty Societies

Grant to the American Society of Transplant Surgeons will assist the 1,100 members of this prestigious society dedicated to quality in transplant related clinical care

MINNEAPOLIS – February 26, 2008 – The United Health Foundation today announced a \$25,000 grant to the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS) as the first award in its Advancing Clinical Excellence program that will provide \$500,000 in grant support to medical specialty societies for the purpose of assisting them in fulfilling their clinical quality improvement missions. The ASTS grant will facilitate the societies’ collaboration with the American Board of Surgery to develop the transplant-specific requirements necessary to advance the new Maintenance of Certification component of surgical Board Certification. The funds will be used to assist in the development of self-reporting instruments, the use of a transplant-specific curriculum that highlights best practices and the use of quality measures specific to transplantation.

“On behalf of our board-certified surgeon members, we are grateful to United Health Foundation for its support of our mission to foster and advance the practice and science of transplantation for the benefit of patients and society,” said Goran B. Klintmalm, M.D., PhD, FACS, president of ASTS. “This grant will be used to design and eventually implement an important initiative that will highlight the role of quality improvement in transplant surgery.”

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“We at the United Health Foundation understand and appreciate that expert physicians, working through their professional societies, should lead in the development of the criteria necessary for quality of care improvement and performance assessment,” said Reed Tuckson, M.D., Director of the United Health Foundation board and Executive Vice President and Chief of Medical Affairs for UnitedHealth Group. “We have great confidence in ASTS’ expertise and commitment to ensure that our nation’s transplant recipients achieve the best possible health outcomes. We also appreciate the importance that the recently developed Maintenance of Certification criteria will have on ensuring that board certification will continue to play an essential role in clinical quality assurance.”

“Despite the fact that transplantation is a highly regulated industry, and that risk-adjusted outcomes have been published for several years, few process quality measures currently exist and outcomes measures are limited to graft and patient survival. As such, the United Health Foundation support will significantly assist our society in addressing a critical issue,” said Michael Abecassis, M.D., MBA, Treasurer of ASTS and Chair of Organ Transplantation at Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation.

Since 2000, the United Health Foundation has invested \$42 million to help physicians and other health professionals advance clinical excellence. For example, the Foundation annually distributes *Clinical Evidence*, the prestigious British Medical Journal Publishing’s guide to what works in clinical care to over 500,000 physicians.

About the American Society of Transplant Surgeons

The American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS) is the only organization in America principally devoted to issues that affect transplant surgeons, their institutions and the patients whom they serve. At the core of the ASTS mission is its commitment to promote training and life-long education of its members. To that end, ASTS has embarked on a quality program that will link quality performance and improvement initiatives with maintenance of certification (MOC) for transplant surgeons. For more information, visit www.astso.org.

About United Health Foundation

The Foundation provides reliable information to support health and medical decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier communities. The Foundation also supports activities that expand access to quality health care for those in challenging circumstances and partners to improve the well being of communities. The Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organization funded solely by UnitedHealth Group. For more information, visit www.unitedhealthfoundation.org.