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**Lee Health brings Tampa General Hospital Kidney Transplant Program to Lee County**  
*New Collaboration Continues to Keep Care Close to Home*

(Fort Myers – Nov. 9, 2018) --- Lee Health announced today the health system has been working with Tampa General Hospital to redefine kidney transplant care in our community while expanding the scope of services available to patients.

On Dec. 3, the Tampa General Hospital Advanced Organ Disease and Transplantation Institute at Lee Health will open in the clinic space at Gulf Coast Medical Center currently occupied by Lee Health's Kidney Transplant Institute. Lee Health's program will permanently discontinue services on Dec. 2.

This change means patients will immediately have access to a variety of transplant services, including live donor transplants, paired donor transplants, deceased kidney transplants and simultaneous multi-organ transplants, such as kidney and pancreas.

Patients who are on the Lee Health transplant waitlist have the option to transfer their wait time to Tampa General Hospital, or any other Medicare-approved transplant center, without loss of accrued waiting time. When a kidney becomes available, patients will travel to Tampa or a transplant center of their choice for their surgery. After a post-surgery recuperation period, they can return to their local nephrologist.

Current transplant nephrologists, Dr. Gautham Mogilishetty and Dr. Shalini Saith, will remain at Gulf Coast Medical Center clinic as part of Tampa General's program to provide pre- and post-operative nephrology care.

"We are excited to provide our transplant patients with access to a world-class, high-volume transplant program. This relationship will bring expanded transplant services to our community, and Tampa General is equipped to make this a seamless transition for current patients," said Scott Nygaard, M.D., Lee Health Chief Operating Officer. "Lee Health makes every decision with the best interest of our patients and community in mind, and I look forward to working with our counterparts at Tampa General to provide exceptional care for transplant patients in Southwest Florida."

"We are delighted to be able to provide new services to patients in Southwest Florida," said Dr. Victor Bowers, executive director of the Tampa General Hospital Institute for Advanced Organ Disease and Transplantation Institute. "These patients now will have access to both the surgical skills and outcomes provided by Tampa General and convenient follow-up care closer to home. This is a collaboration that will allow more patients to receive world-class care."

Tampa General performs an average of more than 225 adult kidney transplants per year and has performed more than 5,000 adult kidney transplants since opening in 1974.

Lee Health's kidney transplant program was temporarily deactivated in August due to a lack of surgical availability. This new relationship will provide stability for Southwest Florida's transplant patients, while also providing access to a nationally ranked transplant program.

Current Lee Health patients have been notified and assistance is available to help navigate the process of transferring to Tampa General's program, or a program of their choosing.

"The changing health care environment has health care leaders across the country looking at new ways to deliver the very best care to our patients", said Larry Antonucci, M.D., President and CEO of Lee Health. "Locally, this means implementing an innovative strategy with Tampa General Hospital to expand transplant access in Southwest Florida, an organization with whom we have shared many patients over the years and one that shares our values."

#### **ABOUT LEE HEALTH**

*Since the opening of the first hospital in 1916, Lee Health has been a health care leader in Southwest Florida, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community. A non-profit, integrated health care services organization, Lee Health is committed to the well-being of every individual served, focused on healthy living and maintaining good health. Staffed by caring people, inspiring health, services are conveniently located throughout the community in four acute care hospitals, two specialty hospitals, outpatient centers, walk-in medical centers, primary care and specialty physician practices and other services across the continuum of care. Formerly known as Lee Memorial Health System, the organization began its second century of service with a new name in 2016. Learn more at [www.LeeHealth.org](http://www.LeeHealth.org).*

#### **ABOUT TAMPA GENERAL HOSPITAL**

*Tampa General Hospital, a 1010-bed non-profit academic medical center, delivers world-class care in the region. It is one of the nation's busiest adult solid organ transplant centers and is the primary teaching hospital for the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine.*