Psychosocial Implications of Liver Transplant

Employment Post Liver Transplant: Is Transplant a Barrier or an Opportunity?

The Psychosocial Evaluation for liver transplant:
- UCSF Liver Transplant Program: 1.8 SW
- Function as integral members of Liver Transplant Team & Selection process
- Psychosocial assessment
- Confirm and educate re: support care needs
- Substance Evaluation/Treatment recommendations
- Contract for Abstinence and random toxicology screening
- Linkage with resources: Support Groups/Community Services
- Supportive counseling/adjustment to illness
- PACT Score: Tool for Rating Patient Candidacy

Employment Pre-Transplant
- Employment history reviewed during SW evaluation
- Employment potential post transplant discussed: “mixed reactions”
- Spectrum of patients: those continuing work until transplant/on short-term disability or long-term disability

Defining Employment & Parameters for Review today
- Employment: income producing job
- Age group: 20’s – 50’s
- Homemakers do add significant percentage to total statistics but excluded for purposes of this presentation
Employment Post Transplant

**WHY?**
- #1-Income and # 2-Insurance (or the reverse!)
- Disability benefits generally fall in the 55% range of prior income
- Disability benefits will END with successful transplant
- Return to work can promote a sense of “wellness” & a return to normalcy which are vital elements of recovery and sense of self worth

Barriers
- Medical recovery issues
- Patient’s perception of his/her recovery
- Inability to return to previous employment: need for training or further education
- “The Economy”: the reality of temp/part-time employment without benefits

Literature Reviews: 1990’s-present
- Overall findings: Employment in high 20th percentile – high 40’s percentile post transplant
- High correlation of return to work for patients gainfully employed pre-txp, at a higher income level (reflective of education or training) and patients with NO disability benefits

Duke & UCLA studies:
- Patients drawing disability over 6 mos. demonstrated lower return to work rate
- Ongoing health problems: whether real or perceived lowered rate
- Rates higher for higher physical functioning/non-diabetic and those with steady prior work history
DeBaere study (April 2010)
- Kidney ranked highest return to work rate at 58.5% followed by heart, liver and then lung at 28.1%
- Volunteerism rate was comparable to the general public: 17% of transplant patients vs. 21% for general public

Programs to support return to work
- Federal/State programs promoting return to work:
  - Department of Rehabilitation
  - Social Security Administration
- Ticket to Work (TTW) and Self Sufficiency Program offering career counseling/job search/vocational training
- These programs offer protection of benefits (SSDI/SSI/MediCal) for those enrolled

Get Organized!
- Programs available but patient needs to be organized, motivated and have support to get through the bureaucracy
- Programs can be intimidating and patients fear loss of benefits during work trial periods
- As social workers/health care providers our role is to help the patient identify a realistic plan and support them through the process

Helpful Websites
- www.disabilitybenefits101.org
- www.edd.ca.gov
- www.dor.ca.gov
- www.ssa.gov
- www.yourtickettowork.com
Literature Review

- Articles referenced to follow:
  - Span from the mid 1990's-2010
  - Available in full text

References:

- Olbrisch, M E, Levenson, J L. Psychosocial Assessment of Organ Transplant Candidates, Psychosomatics, 1995 Volume 36 Number 3; 236-243

Thank You

Sherry Laemmermann, ACSW
Clinical Social Worker
UCSF Liver Transplant Program
415-353-1040
sherry.laemmermann@ucsfmedctr.org

2010 Transplant Symposium
Robert Blackmond
Financial Counselor
Liver Transplant Program
What does a Liver Transplant Financial Counselor Do?

Money is the last thing patients want to talk about when they are sick!!!

Liver Transplant Financial Counselor

- Patient Insurance Advocate
- Patient Educator in Insurance
- Financial Gate Keeper for the Medical Center
  - Insurance Contracts
  - Letters of Agreements (LOA)
  - Authorizations

Patient Insurance Advocate

- Appeals (Letter of Agreement)
- Medi-Cal SOC Appeals
- COBRA ends (63 day conversion)
- National Transplant Foundation

Patient Insurance Educator

- Financial Shock Therapy
  - The cost associated with Liver Transplant can exceed $1,000,000.00

Do I have to pay $1,000,000.00??!!
Patient Insurance Educator (cont.)

- Liver Transplant Evaluation Day (Pre/Transplant/Post)
  - Do you have enough coverage
    - Benefit Summary (Deductibles, Out-of-Pocket Maximums, Co-payments, Coinsurance)
    - Coverage Limitations (COBRA, Donors, Disability Insurance)?
  - Are you eligible for Medi-Cal?
  - Fund Raising

- Medications
  - Cost approx. $6,000/month for first 1-6 months post transplant
  - Patient exercise “How much does my medication cost?”
    - Copayments Range approx. $130 up to $3,700 for co-pay

- Post Transplant Financial Expectations
  - (Follow up appointments, labs, medications)
  - Prescription Assistance Program (PAP)
    - Must Financially Qualify
    - Must be a US Citizen

Liver Transplant

- LIVER TRANSPLANT = LIFETIME FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Thank you!

Questions/Answers