**Icon

Description automatically generated**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

Carly Giarrusso, PriceWeber  
502-938-9305  
CGiarrusso@priceweber.com 

**First-Ever Donor Kidney Flies Unattended for Lifesaving Transplant**

*Groundbreaking perfusion pump proves kidneys can be flown commercially, tracked by GPS, and kept viable longer to reach more transplant patients*

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (July 31, 2023)** – Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KODA) announces the successful transportation of the first-ever donor kidney flown on a functioning perfusion pump unattended by a medical team. Using new technology, the deceased donor’s kidney flew commercially from Louisville on July 13, 2023 to save the life of a patient at the University of Mississippi Medical Center that morning.

Normally, donated organs on a perfusion pump can only be flown with a medical team and on short-distance charter flights. This is due to technology limitations and federal regulations that organs are not to be flown on a commercial airline on a functioning pump. The new technology, funded earlier this year by a grant from the Kidney Transplant Collaborative, also includes GPS tracking to allow KODA staff to monitor the organ in transit.

The LifePort Kidney Transporter was developed by Organ Recovery Systems (ORS) and is the first-ever aviation-capable pulsatile perfusion pump. ORS, the leading organ preservation product and service provider, developed this technological advancement to align with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and aims to improve organ viability and transplant acceptance rates to save lives.

KODA is an organ procurement organization (OPO) dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation and transplantation. “This technology has the potential to revolutionize the transportation of organs and save more lives of those waiting for a kidney transplant. We will be able to transport farther and preserve organs like never before,” said Julie Bergin, President and CEO of KODA.

Historically, when a kidney is recovered, it is kept sterile in a cooler of ice to maintain viability while transported by vehicle or airplane to the transplant center. The ice is where the limitations lie. Many times, kidneys are not transplanted because of prolonged cold ischemic time, the time that the organ is kept on ice after its blood supply has been removed, which could reduce the viability of the organ. With the new aviation-approved transportation of the LKT, cold ischemic times are eliminated because the kidney stays perfused on the pump throughout the entire transport to the transplant operating room.

Dr. Christopher Anderson, James D. Hardy professor and chair of the Department of Surgery and chief of the Division of Transplant and Hepatobiliary Surgery at the University of Mississippi Medical Center said, “It really, in my mind, worked seamlessly. It is better for the patient and better for the kidney. I’m really appreciative of Kentucky doing this. It’s a great example of an OPO trying to resolve the problems we sometimes have in transplant.”

While perfusion pumps have long existed to improve kidney outcomes, the LKT fits in a custom crate that meets FAA regulations. The LKT, in combination with innovative GPS technologies, makes this level of advancement in organ transplantation possible.

Since the kidneys will be unaccompanied by a medical team on the flight, KODA partnered with supply chain visibility company, OnAsset Intelligence, which will monitor the pump and exact GPS location. Developed within current FAA regulations, this innovation will help to eliminate delivery delays ensuring a smooth and timely transit.  
  
“We can’t wait to witness the advancements that will follow this groundbreaking solution, as well as the impact this technology will have on other organ procurement agencies across the nation. The invaluable cooperation of our partners has made this innovation a reality,” says Bergin. “This has the potential to increase equity in organ transplantation, especially in areas like Hawaii or the coasts. By reducing or eliminating cold ischemic time during long flights, this technology will get an organ to the sickest patients. With this technology, a donor in California could save the life of someone in New York. We are optimistic that this will provide hope for those in need of the precious gift of life.”

Bergin adds, “Of course, none of this is possible without the selfless, generous gift from a heroic donor and their family. We encourage everyone to register as donors to save the lives of those 100,000 kids and adults waiting for organ transplants today.”

For b-roll of the aviation-approved pulsatile perfusion pump, [click here](https://priceweber.sharefile.com/d-s113d66c45d5445d28264450b8c1444a0).

For more information on the innovative technology, [click here](https://donatelifeky.org/news-stories/from-recovery-to-reception-kidney-transplant-collaborative-grant-funds-innovative-program-to-increase-transplant-rates-nationwide/).

To learn more about Donate Life KY and the impact of organ donors throughout Kentucky, visit [www.donatelifeky.org](http://www.donatelifeky.org).

**About Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KODA):**

Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KODA) is dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation and transplantation. KODA was formed in 1987 to establish a statewide educational and procurement network. KODA is an independent, non-profit organ and tissue procurement agency and was recognized by Louisville Business First as the Non-profit of the Year in 2011. KODA serves 114 counties in Kentucky, four counties in southern Indiana and two counties in western West Virginia, with a devoted team of more than 150 healthcare workers and staff. For more information and to register as an organ donor, visit www.donatelifeky.org.

**###**