

Medicine

# 8-way kidney swap performed

## Exchange sets record, fosters donor system

By Aaron Morrison

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**BALTIMORE** | A transplant surgeon who completed an unprecedented eight-way kidney swap this week said Tuesday that he thinks such intricate, multistate exchanges can drastically reduce the number of patients waiting for eligible donors.

Dr. Robert Montgomery, chief transplant surgeon at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and doctors at four hospitals in four states transplanted eight kidneys over three weeks in what he called the largest chain of donations in history.

"We finally beat the 'Grey's Anatomy' record for domino transplants," Dr. Montgomery joked at a news conference hours after the last in a series of surgeries was completed Monday night.

"We hope this creates a movement that encourages other transplant centers to adopt the model we used."

The donor pool in the United States could facilitate 1,500 transplants per year if transplant centers nationwide participated in computer modeling that matches donors with recipients, Dr. Montgomery said.

Multiple-kidney transplants occur when several people who need transplants have friends or relatives who are willing to



Donor Pamela Paulk, 55, and surgeon Dr. Robert Montgomery share her transplant story Tuesday at Johns Hopkins University. "My kidney lives and pees in St. Louis right now."

donate kidneys but aren't compatible. A chain of surgeries is arranged in which each donor is matched with a transplant candidate who they don't know but is compatible with the kidney being given up. The chain of transplants typically also involve a so-called altruistic donor, who's willing to give a kidney to anyone and is located through a database.

Ten doctors performed 16 surgeries on the eight donors and eight recipients at Johns

Hopkins, Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Integris Baptist Memorial Center in Oklahoma City and Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Recipients and donors were equally delighted to be part of unique procedure.

"My kidney lives and pees in St. Louis right now," said a teary Pamela Paulk, a 55-year-old donor and a vice president of human resources at Johns Hopkins.

Ms. Paulk joined the group

because a co-worker of hers needed a kidney but wasn't compatible with hers.

Kidneys given by living donors are estimated to have double the longevity of kidneys taken from cadavers, Dr. Montgomery said.

Surgeons at Johns Hopkins transplanted six kidneys simultaneously in April 2008 and performed a quintuple transplant in 2006. They have also completed several triple transplants.