On behalf of our Department of Surgery, I am pleased to announce the beginning of a new era in renal transplantation surgery in the Continuum Network of Hospitals. The recruitment of Dr. Alan I. Benvenisty and his team from the Columbia-Presbyterian Campus of the New York Presbyterian Medical Center positions St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital at the forefront of renal transplantation services in the tri-state region.

Dr. Benvenisty has been active in the specialty of renal transplantation since 1984. The clinical results that he has been able to achieve are the very best recorded in a recent state-wide audit of New York programs. He is a thoughtful, caring clinician and a skillful surgeon with vast experience in thousands of operations. Having worked closely with "Dr. Ben" for two decades, I can attest to his unwavering integrity and steadfast devotion to his patients. He has developed an enormous following of transplant, vascular and general surgery patients. In addition to an extremely active surgical practice, he has devoted significant time to teaching medical students and residents, published extensively in the surgical literature and has held leadership positions in specialty societies committed to increasing our knowledge in the areas of organ transplantation and vascular surgery.
The Continuum Board of Trustees and the SLR Hospital Administration have invested significantly in our improved renal transplantation program. Renovated outpatient evaluation facilities, a "dedicated" inpatient transplant unit at St. Luke's Hospital and a significantly augmented clinical support staff have been added to our prestigious new leadership team. The changes in our program have already been widely recognized. Within two months of arriving at SLR, our new team has received unconditional approval from all of the regulatory agencies charged with review and oversight of renal transplantation programs. As of this time, our program is fully functioning.

Our team is an experienced group of dedicated professionals who have a proven record of providing world-class transplantation services. I can assure our physicians and patients that we are indeed fortunate to have been able to attract Dr. Benvenisty and his entire team to join the thriving and rapidly-expanding Continuum Health Care System.

George J. Todd, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Chairman, Department of Surgery
The renal transplantation program at St. Luke’s Hospital is beginning anew. Orchestrating and energizing St. Luke - Roosevelt’s transformation into a world-class transplantation center is Dr. Alan I. Benvenisty. His arrival represents the keystone of a rapidly expanding Continuum Transplantation Program marked by capital improvements and cooperation between the Continuum hospitals. He brings technical excellence, medical understanding and a vision of the successful transplant team that he has refined throughout his distinguished career.

Dr. Benvenisty was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in the suburbs of New York City. He maintains a true native’s allegiance to the New York area. He graduated summa cum laude from Union College and attended medical school at Columbia University. He completed his residency in general surgery at the Presbyterian Hospital. Attracted to transplant surgery because "it is a very unique field where a tremendous amount of basic science knowledge is necessary to take care of the patient at the bedside," he continued his training with a peripheral vascular and transplant surgery fellowship at the Presbyterian Hospital. Upon completion of his fellowship in 1984, he joined the staff of Columbia University’s Presbyterian Hospital. During the last two decades, Dr. Benvenisty has performed almost 500 renal transplants. His dedication to transplant surgery brought him to many leadership positions, including Chairman of the Kidney/Pancreas Committee for the New York Regional Transplant Program, President of New York Transplantation Society, a position on the Education and the Program Committees for the American Society for Transplant Surgery and a position on the Pediatric Committee of the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS).

Dr. Benvenisty has been a course director for Columbia medical students for almost twenty years.

St. Luke’s - Roosevelt Hospital Center is proud to have Dr. Alan I. Benvenisty at the helm of its transplantation program.

Author: Dr. Laura Withers
Throughout his career, Dr. Benvenisty has planned and refined the structure of a coordinated and committed multi-disciplinary approach to patient care. His new transplant team at St. Luke's - Roosevelt Hospital is committed to the varied and complex needs of transplant patients. Each member holds quality and patient care paramount and creates a plan which is personalized for each particular patient.

Dr. Steven Smith is one of the St. Luke's - Roosevelt nephrologists whose expertise and experience plays a crucial role in the care of these patients. He trained at Columbia University's Presbyterian Hospital and has extensive clinical experience here at SLR. Dr. Marc Bessler supports the team with minimally invasive harvests and laparoscopic donor procedures. Dr. Fred Kimmelstiel, who himself has a great deal of experience in the transplant arena, will be assisting Dr. Benvenisty with the transplant surgery. Barbara Hanley boasts almost twenty years of experience which will aid her in her role of administrator for the transplant department. Barbara Lindower, R.N., an integral member of the team at SLR for several years, has worked closely with Dr. Benvenisty and the new team to assure a smooth transition and provide continuity of care for our patients. Catherine Carota, a social worker, will be specially devoted to meeting the needs of transplant patients and their families. Celenia Mane, a financial administrator, helps coordinate insurance issues.

Other surgeons in the department will contribute with their own experience in transplant surgery and expertise in other surgical fields. St. Luke's - Roosevelt's surgical residents will assist and learn. Specialized sonographers will assess grafts and kidney function. Radiologists, anesthesiologists, and dieticians will work together, each functioning as a vital member of the team. "One surgeon can't do it," says Dr. Benvenisty in a sternly emphatic tone. "Even two doctors together can't really do it right. You need a really interested and devoted team. That is what we have assembled here at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center."
The past decades of St. Luke's - Roosevelt Hospital's transplantation surgery are characterized by innovation and development. In 1971, Dr. Lawrence Stevens joined St. Luke's Hospital as Director of the Division of Surgical Research and Director of the Transplantation Program. During these busy times, Dr. Robert McCabe pioneered the development of one of the first organ perfusion and preservation machines. This groundbreaking innovation extended the viability of harvested kidneys from minutes to days and marked St. Luke's Hospital and its research laboratories as leaders in organ transplantation throughout New York and the rest of the country.

Under the leadership of Dr. Lawrence Stevens and Dr. Conrad Lattes, St. Luke's started a dedicated fellowship in renal transplantation. In 1973, Dr. Danne Lorico was the first surgeon to take this position and he still practices at St. Luke's - Roosevelt Hospital to this date. Further research endeavors in the mid 1970's continued under the leadership of Dr. James Pierce.

In 1979, Dr. Conrad Lattes became the first Director of Clinical Transplantation at St. Luke's Hospital. During this period, the department enjoyed a successful surge in staff and growth of the fellowship program. Familiar graduates of the research fellowship include Drs. William Ramey, Fred Kimmelstiel, Daniel Swistel and Alexander Swistel.

In 1992, with construction of the new St. Luke's Hospital building, the transplant program flourished under the leadership of Drs. Lorico and Kimmelstiel, who both played active roles shaping the program. Later in 1997, with the arrival of Dr. John Tomasula, the program assigned a dedicated transplant surgeon.

Combining over thirty years of experienced transplant surgeons with the new leadership of Dr. Alan I. Benvenisty, our program is poised to become the premier center of excellence for renal transplant in New York City and beyond.
Renal transplant is an exciting field. It is always changing and so I am always learning," Dr. Benvenisty states. As part of providing the best care to his patients, his transplantation program must also engage in the research that is transforming the field. Current research interests include studies of hemodynamics for sequential lower extremity bypass as well as radiation and Rapamycin therapy for neo-intimal hyperplasia. He is also involved in evaluating new techniques and cutting-edge products. Dr. Benvenisty is testing new kinds of aortic endografts and studying flexible renal stents to aid renal salvage.

Dr. Benvenisty sees expanding the living donor pool as the greatest challenge facing renal transplantation today. "We need creative ways to use organs from donors who are not completely compatible with the transplant recipient. Techniques for accomplishing this might include plasmapheresis, the use of monoclonal anti-B antibodies or specific directed immunosuppressive protocols." He hopes to continue cooperative research with the other Columbia campuses, allowing extension of protocols that evaluate immunosuppressive treatments to the St. Luke's - Roosevelt program.

The program’s mission is to provide excellence in renal transplantation to any person in need of living-related or cadaveric kidney transplantation. Dr. Benvenisty prides himself on a long standing collaborative relationship with many nephrologists and nephrology centers in the greater New York area. He hopes to expand these relationships by creating a regional renal transplant referral and support center. This support network will provide information and services to both the transplant recipient and the primary physicians that are caring for the patient. Additional services will provide selective outpatient follow-up of transplant related issues, as well as inpatient care if deemed necessary by the referring nephrologists or the transplant surgeon.

"This is an exciting time for an exciting field," says Dr. Benvenisty with the earnest enthusiasm of an individual clearly relishing the experience of creating a multi-disciplinary team and actively building a world-class renal transplant program.
Spring has arrived at the entrance to Roosevelt Hospital.