



Medical Examiner partners with SightLife to increase organ and tissue donations

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As many as 300 people will receive sight-restoring transplants each year thanks to an innovative partnership between the Pierce County Medical Examiner and SightLife, a global nonprofit focused on eliminating corneal blindness.

Under the partnership, Seattle-based SightLife's tissue recovery technicians now have 24-hour access to the Medical Examiner's office, which enables them to closely coordinate their work with the county's death investigators.

"The old system was inefficient because our investigators and SightLife's staff were operating independently. As a result, we were missing opportunities to save lives," said Dr. Thomas Clark, Pierce County's medical examiner. "We are not aware of any other situation in Washington State in which tissue banks are co-located with death investigators. Both of our organizations play important roles in public health, and working together means we will identify more prospects for tissue donation."

As a global health organization and eye bank, SightLife works in partnership with surgeons and health organizations in more than 29 countries. They collaborated to provide nearly 17,000 corneas for transplant in 2013.

SightLife's role goes beyond just eyes. SightLife operates a communication center in Seattle that coordinates the recovery of all tissues with two other nonprofit tissue banks.

"We estimate this partnership will result in up to 17 cornea donors and five tissue donors per month," said Monty Montoya, president and CEO of SightLife. "That

could mean up to 300 people receiving sight-restoring transplants each year. Working together increases donation recovery opportunities. That benefits the people receiving these tissues as well as donor families, who know their loved ones are helping others."

"I am proud of Dr. Clark and his team at the Medical Examiner's Office for making this important improvement in public health," said Pierce County Executive Pat McCarthy. "One donor can save or improve the lives of as many as 50 people." To register for organ donation, visit www.donatelifetoday.com.