

Acceptance Speech of Professor  
**THOMAS EARL STARZL**

CoP Winner of the 2001  
King Faisal International Prize for Medicine  
Friday 16 February 2001 (22 Dhu AlP Qedah 1421H)

Your Royal Highness, Prince Abd Allah bin Abd AlP Aziz  
The Crown Prince, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Head of  
the National Guard  
Your Royal Highnesses  
Your Excellencies  
Distinguished Guests

I want to thank all of the people responsible for my presence here today: those who nominated me for the King Faisal International Prize, the jury that selected the winners, and the members of the royal family of Saudi Arabia who established this prize to honor and perpetuate the memory of a fallen leader. I stand indebted to the universities in Chicago, Denver, and Pittsburgh where I worked on problems of transplantation over the last 43 years. The sacrifices by my associates and by people who worked in other laboratories and hospitals around the world, ultimately made it possible for hundreds of thousands of patients dying of endP stage organ failure to be saved by transplantation.

The impact of these efforts on health care has been profound. Before transplantation, the treatment of organ failure consisted of palliative measures designed to slow, or compensate for, the declining function of the organ in question. With the option of transplantation, in which the failing organ system was completely replaced, the philosophy by which the organP specific medical specialties was practiced was changed forever: first in nephrology, next in hepatology, and then with all of the others.

Despite the power of the concept, however, the acceptance of transplantation did not occur overnight. For many years, the rank and file of the medical and scientific establishments viewed organ transplantation as a biologically unsound undertaking and were

particularly critical of efforts to replace the liver and heart. The patients, some of whom remain, even today, from the earliest days of transplantation, eliminated the opposition by the mere fact of surviving. The longest continuously functioning renal allograft in the world is in its 39th post-transplant year in one of our first Colorado patients who now is 76 years old. The world's longest surviving liver recipient is more than 31 years post-transplantation.

Thus, instead of disappearing from the medical armamentarium, as so often happens with new and controversial kinds of treatment, transplantation flourished. Growth of the field hinged on the development of progressively more potent immunosuppressive regimens, a process in which Sir Roy Calne played a unique role. The rewards for those who labored in these human vineyards have been material; more importantly, they have been spiritual. The greatest fulfillment in life is to see something of yourself, if only once, in the face of another human being who would not have lived without your intervention. Workers in the field have this experience on good days, and that experience makes bearable the worst of days.

At times during the last 40 years, I have felt like a ship on a turbulent sea of destiny. No one could survive for long like that without an orienting beacon emanating from solid ground. My moral lighthouse was my wife, Joy, who is here today. Without her, I would have given up half-way through the storm. Thank you, Joy, from the bottom of my heart for what you have done and now for sharing this special moment at the end.