

Press Release

Awareness-raising group leaves Madrid tomorrow to arrive on 22nd June in Malaga, venue of the 21st World Transplant Games to be held from 25th June to 2 July

Group of transplant cyclists starts out to promote physical activity among transplant recipients

- The Fit for Life! Cycle Tour, with the collaboration of Astellas Pharma, aims to help transplant recipients around the world live full and active lives through ongoing physical activity.
- The group will visit the transplant units of various hospitals over the course of the six-stage ride.
- A healthy lifestyle is particularly important following an organ transplant as poor lifestyle habits can increase the risk of transplant rejection¹.
- Exercise among transplant recipients is physically and emotionally beneficial, translating into quality of life.
- The Cycle Tour also tells the rest of the world ‘if these people with life-saving organ transplants can do extraordinary physical pursuits, then why can’t I?’.

Madrid, 16 June 2017 – A cycling team of transplant recipients will leave Madrid tomorrow to arrive in Malaga on 22nd June. This is an initiative promoted by the [World Transplant Games Federation](#) (WTGF) as part of its *Fit For Life!* programme, with the collaboration of Astellas Pharma, which aims to raise awareness among transplant recipients and the general public regarding the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

In the words of Chris Thomas, president of the WTGF and team member, “Our federation is committed to encouraging transplant recipients to be more active, more often, because research shows that physical fitness plays a critical role in maintaining long-term well-being for transplant recipients.

***Fit for Life!*: commitment and example**

The Cycle Tour is part of the *Fit for Life!* global programme of the World Transplant Games Federation, which aims to help transplant recipients live full and active lives physical activity and participation in organised sports. “*Fit for Life!* is a mantra that

everyone in the society, and especially transplant recipients, should embrace,” Mr Thomas said.

“Our fit for Life! Initiative encourages not just transplant recipients but people from all over the world to think about physical fitness and get active. We have Fit for Life! Ambassadors that they transplanted hearts and lungs, livers and kidney. If they can get active, so can other members of the community. As a person who hasn’t had a transplant, I can tell you this message is just as important for me and the general community as it is for the transplant population”.

To achieve it, a group of people from different countries around the world living with a transplant and who have kept in shape and active following transplantation have been brought together. They are the *Fit for Life!* “ambassadors” and their mission is to inspire other recipients through their own commitment to remaining fit and active post-transplant. They also participate in sports programmes and encourage other people to attend the Transplant Games.

The Spanish ambassador of this international programme is triathlete Francisco Sanz, who says: “it is very common to become sedentary after you leave hospital; you think you're cured and there’s nothing else to do. But luckily, we have an excellent tool to successfully deliver on all the phases that transplant recipients face, reduce medical treatments and extend implant life - physical activity”.

At the same time, and just as importantly, he says, “this is the best way to demonstrate to society the help that people have given us and the importance of donation. An initiative like the Cycle tourbicycle march is a good way to show how a transplant recipient can lead a full life”.

The six-stage march will start in Madrid and finish in Malaga, taking in the cities of Toledo, Ciudad Real, Fuencaliente, Cordoba, Antequera and Malaga. The team will visit the transplant units of some of the local hospitals along the way, including the Reina Sofía in Cordoba and the Carlos Haya in Malaga. The group will reach Malaga on 22nd June and the [21st World Transplant Games](#) will begin three days later, on 25th June, and end in the Andalusian city on 2nd July.

Spain has been the world leader in donations and transplants for 25 years in a row, according to the latest figures from the country's [National Transplant Organisation](#) (ONT): 43.4 donors per million inhabitants (a total of 2,018 donors) and 4,818 transplants. A total of 2,994 kidney transplants, 1,159 liver transplants, 281 heart

transplants, 307 lung transplants, 73 pancreas transplants and four intestinal transplants were performed last year.

Sport and transplantation is possible

Undergoing a transplant and getting back into sport shortly afterwards is not only viable but advisable for physical and emotional health. In fact, people can even become elite athletes. Ask handball coach and president of the Sport and Transplant Association Spain, Mateo Ruiz, who says that “behind every transplant there is a life, a quality life. And what better way than through sport to showcase everything that is good about donation and the positive outcomes it can entail”.

A healthy lifestyle is particularly important following an organ transplant as poor lifestyle habits can increase the risk of implant rejection¹. It is important, however, to always follow medical advice and undergo check-ups in hospital.

In any case, as cycling team member José López, president of the Transplant Sports Club Andalusia and vice-president of the Sport and Transplant Association Spain says, “basic exercise like walking half an hour a day or climbing stairs at the pace each person can is within everyone’s reach and can be a good way to start activating the body”.

The two representatives of the Sport and Transplant Association Spain say that “when a person is told they need a transplant their world collapses. As sports fans we want to put out a message of calm and hope and be an example for everybody who needs a reference point”.

###

About the World Transplant Games Federation

The World Transplant Games Federation unites transplant recipients from across the world to promote the success of organ and tissue donation and life-saving transplantation. With more than 70 member countries, the WTGF stages the world’s largest awareness event for transplantation, the Summer World Games, to inspire the public to consider organ and tissue donation. The WTGF also inspires recipients to rehabilitate following their transplant and keep fit and healthy in their ongoing journey.

About Astellas

Astellas Pharma is an international pharmaceuticals company whose objective is to contribute to the improvement of patient health through the development and commercialisation of innovative and reliable pharmaceutical products. Astellas is on the forefront of healthcare change to turn innovative science into value for patients. For more information, please visit our website at www.astellas.es.

###

Bibliography

1. Managing Your Health After an Organ Transplant. (2014, 16 July). Consulted 28 July 2016, at <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/organ-transplant-after-the-transplant?page=3>

Contact:

Cícero Comunicación

Laura Mayoral

PH: 91 7500640 / lauramayoral@cicerocomunicacion.es

World Transplant Games Federation (WTGF)

President

Chris Tomas

PH: 612425353893 / chris.thomas@wtgf.org

Astellas Pharma

Corporate Affairs and Communication

Margot Kubosch

PH: 91 4952700 / asuntoscorporativos@astellas.com

June 2017