

Protecting the Research Enterprise That Advances Thoracic Transplantation and Patient Care

Introduction: The International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) is an international, multidisciplinary society dedicated to improving the lives of patients with advanced heart and lung disease through research, education, and clinical innovation. For over four decades, ISHLT has brought together clinicians, scientists, surgeons, allied health professionals, and trainees from around the world to advance the care of patients requiring transplantation and mechanical circulatory support.

The groundbreaking progress achieved in thoracic transplantation has been defined by rigorous scientific discovery and collaboration. What is now the standard of care was once ambitious research questions that required years of investigation, validation, and translation to patients. Our ability to conduct, communicate, and collaborate on research remains imperative to improving outcomes for patients worldwide now and for the future.

Scientific Discovery Advances Patient Outcomes: Thoracic transplantation demonstrates how research translates directly into patient benefit through investigation, multidisciplinary collaborative efforts, and validation.

Research emerging from members of the ISHLT community has transformed contemporary practices in advanced heart and lung failure, including the development of novel immunosuppressive therapies, molecular diagnostics for rejection detection, mechanical circulatory support, ventricular assist devices, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, ex vivo lung perfusion, donor optimization strategies, and emerging fields such as xenotransplantation. These innovations have expanded options and outcomes for patients who have previously had few therapeutic avenues. Progress in thoracic transplantation does not occur in isolation. Rather, it reflects decades of contributions across multidisciplinary teams, institutions, and across continents working together towards meaningful discoveries that improve patient outcomes.

Research discoveries require an ecosystem of stable funding, dissemination of knowledge, mentorship, training of future investigators, partnerships, and international collaboration. Any one component that is weakened slows progress and affects patients worldwide.

Stable and Predictable Research Support: Transparent, merit-based, and scientifically rigorous funding is an essential investment in the future of thoracic transplant research. Long-term support allows investigators to pursue critical gaps in knowledge, develop innovative therapies and technologies, build collaborations, and mentor future generations of research professionals. Many of the innovations that define contemporary thoracic transplantation were established over years of incremental discovery, validation, and deployment. This would not have been possible without ongoing and stable support for scientific inquiry. Additionally, stable support for research not only accelerates innovation but also strengthens the workforce and infrastructure necessary to address future challenges in transplantation and advanced heart and lung failure.



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A Society that Includes Basic Science, the
Failing Heart, & Advanced Lung Disease

Independent Scientific Peer Review Ensures Scientific Excellence: Evaluation of research proposals by appropriate scientific experts ensures that the science is assessed rigorously and objectively based on established scientific standards. Independent scientific peer review ensures accountability, scientific quality, and directs limited funding towards the most promising discoveries. Advances in thoracic transplantation occurred through scientific processes that encourage critical evaluation, open discussion, and transparency. These principles maintain public trust in science and support the development of evidence that can be translated into improved patient care.

International Collaboration Accelerates Innovation: International collaboration is a defining feature of thoracic transplantation progress. Because thoracic transplantation involves relatively smaller patient populations due to limited indications and donor organs available, meaningful advances require collaboration across institutions, countries, and continents. The ISHLT Registry of global clinical outcomes data represents one of the most important examples of this collaborative effort, providing insights that have shaped clinical practice, informed guidelines, and advanced research worldwide.

By bringing together data and expertise from across the international transplant community, collaborative initiatives such as the ISHLT Registry have accelerated discovery in ways that would not have been possible through isolated efforts. Patients around the world benefit when researchers, clinicians, and professional societies work together toward shared goals. Scientific discovery is strengthened when knowledge, experience, and data can be exchanged openly across borders.

Scientific Communication and Professional Meetings Matter: Advancing scientific discoveries is dependent on effective communication of research. Peer-reviewed publications allow new discoveries to be scrutinized, replicated, and incorporated into future investigations. Similarly, professional meetings provide a forum for presenting emerging data, fostering collaborations, identifying research priorities, connecting investigators across disciplines, mentorship, and the development of future leaders in thoracic transplantation. Many of the collaborations and research initiatives that have shaped our field began through conversations at scientific meetings.

Looking Forward: The opportunities to improve outcomes for transplant recipients continue to grow. Advances in organ preservation and repair, donor optimization, precision immunology, biomarker development, artificial intelligence, regenerative medicine, and advanced organ support technologies hold tremendous promise for the future. The next generation of advances will require the same collaborative infrastructure that enabled previous breakthroughs. All components of rigorous science, open communication, meaningful collaboration, strong mentorship, independent expert review, and sustained investment in research are necessary for improving patient care worldwide.

ISHLT Principles: ISHLT supports independent, peer-reviewed scientific research as the foundation for improving patient outcomes. We support transparent, predictable, and scientifically rigorous research funding processes; independent expert review; open dissemination of research findings; international scientific collaboration; and professional forums that promote education, mentorship, and innovation.



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Every advance that expands the donor pool, improves graft survival, reduces rejection, advances need for mechanical support, or enhances quality of life begins with research. Policies and practices that endorse scientific inquiry, collaboration, and the open exchange of ideas ultimately benefit the patients and families we serve. ISHLT remains committed to fostering the environment that allows those discoveries to occur and to ensuring that scientific advances continue to improve care for patients worldwide.