REVA is a provider of transport for human organs by means of a fleet of 15 aircraft. For shorter distances, helicopters are simply unbeatable and our company’s ground, medical, and flight crews operate a fleet of medically-equipped Learjets and other fixed-wing aircraft that covers the North American continent, the Caribbean basin, Central and South America, and extends into Europe and other international locations. Currently, organ transport services are offered for the US Department of Health & Human Services’ Region 3, which consists of six states in the Southeast as well as Puerto Rico,” says Dawn Cerbone, REVA’s senior vice-president for sales and marketing.

“Mainly hearts, but also livers and lungs, which should be implanted within six hours, require fast transportation. This is an issue in the context of international organ exchange. Jets are required, if one of these organs is dropped off at the hospitals without needing to be brought in. Flights are flown by a leading transplant hospital for organ transports with flight hours ranging from 2 to 5.3, v.l. locations ranging from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to San Juan, Puerto Rico to Fort Lauderdale, Florida.”

As examples of choice of jet over rotary aircraft, REVA was engaged by a leading transplant hospital for organ transports with flight hours ranging from 2 to 5.3, v.l. locations ranging from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to San Juan, Puerto Rico to Fort Lauderdale, Florida.}{http://ejcts.oxfordjournals.org/content/40/6/1368.long}
sometimes transporting just the donor organ, and other times transporting the transplant medical team with or without organs,” adds Cerbone.

**Best practices**

There are multiple best practices to be complied with while performing flights for medical transplants. These cover crew training and qualification, specific operational procedures, co-ordination with the medical staff, an operations control centre that’s trained and competent with regard to the operation, and the evaluation of mission profiles and timings including waiting times. Other optional but recommended practices include the flight following of the organs via dedicated transponders and the storage of the organs in a storage box, which keeps the organs at low temperatures. “For the transport of an organ itself, a medical crew is not required. But, if hearts, lungs or livers are procured, surgical teams from the transplant centres travel to harvest the organs at the procurement hospitals. Often, they are accompanied by a transplant co-ordinator, who provides proper information about timelines and organ quality to the transplant in the transplant centres,” says Fleischmann. “It’s important for us as ‘transporters’ to always be prepared for the needs of the teams and ready to take-off when the procurement is finalised. If weather conditions change during these operations, we organise alternatives with police cars or ambulance vehicles. Procurements are mostly during the night-time and the teams are often up day and night. We make the transporters as comfortable as possible for them.”

Landis comments: “We are probably one of the very few institutions in the US where the air medical programme, such as Survival Flight, partners with their organ procurement department. Other emergency helicopter departments normally do not transport their teams. Sometimes the transplant crew is composed of two surgeons, a perfusionist and a fellow to provide him/her with a learning/educational opportunity.”

**Monitoring system**

Organ transport is not an emergency medical service mission and therefore does not require specific approvals. It is a must, however, that a system of methods and dedicated operating procedures be implemented in order to manage the co-ordination with any medical staff onboard to safeguard the safety of flight and the integrity of the organ. Cerbone stresses that organ transportation requires the highest level of facility-to-facility co-ordination — timing is of the essence. “Throughout the organ transport process, REVA’S team performs constant monitoring and engages in thorough communication to ensure delivery of the highest quality of service. REVA has been an organ transport provider for decades and is very proud to be a provider for a critical service that affects individuals and families in the most profound way possible,” she says.

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