

*Media Advisory*

April 11, 2007

Contact: Lorraine Nelson

CHILDREN RECEIVE LIFE-SAVING TRANSPLANTS AT  
HOLTZ CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

**Who:** University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Medical Center physicians Andreas Tzakis, M.D., director of the Liver/GI Transplant Program and co-director of the Division of Transplantation; Gennaro Selvaggi, M.D., assistant professor of surgery; Gaetano Ciancio, M.D., professor of Transplant and Urology; and Erick Hernandez, M.D., pediatric gastroenterologist. Parents Bessy and Jose Avila, Kerry Kelly and Luz Gonzalez. Transplant recipients seven-month-old Zacariah Kelly and 13-year-old Melissa Gonzalez.

**What:** Nine-year-old Roberto Avila was born with severe cerebral palsy. He had no motor skills, was incapacitated and unable to stand or hold his head up without assistance. On March 14, 2007, Roberto's brother (Jose) went to wake him up and found him completely unconscious. Jose called 911 while Bessy started doing CPR. Fire Rescue was called but was unable to revive him. He was taken to Memorial Regional where he was put on life support and later transferred to Joe DiMaggio's Children's Hospital. Numerous tests were performed to assess brain function but Roberto remained in a coma. On Thursday, March 15, 2007, at 3:25 p.m., Roberto was pronounced brain dead.

The Avilas were aware of 13-year-old Melissa Gonzalez's need for a kidney transplant and decided to inquire about donating Roberto's organs for transplantation. Tests were done and Melissa turned out to be a 100% match to receive Roberto's kidneys. Robert's liver was also a match for seven-month-old Zacariah Kelly. His lungs will be used for research and his eyes may potentially give two more recipients the chance to see.

Zacariah Kelly was diagnosed with biliary atresia on October 18, 2006. A liver biopsy and a Kasai procedure were performed October 23, 2006. The Kasai procedure involved connecting the small intestines to the liver. She was evaluated for transplantation on January 6, 2007, at Holtz Children Hospital. On February 11, 2007, she was placed on waiting list for a liver transplant. Zacariah's liver transplant took place on March 17, 2007, 10:30 a.m., at Holtz Children's Hospital. The surgery was performed by Drs. Andreas Tzakis and Gennaro Selvaggi. The surgery lasted seven hours.

Melissa Gonzalez was diagnosed with renal failure in March 2006 because one of her kidneys had not developed and the other was functioning at 15%. In June 2006, she was put on dialysis. Her kidneys continued to deteriorate and she lost

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the function of her legs. On February 14, 2007, she had knee surgery because the kidneys needed calcium and were taking it from her knees. She had physical therapy at home to be able to walk on her own and bend her knees. Her kidneys continued to deteriorate and on February 26, 2007, Melissa was put on the waiting list for a transplant. Melissa's kidney transplant took place on March 17, 2007, 11:30 p.m., at Holtz Children's Hospital. Dr. Gaetano Ciancio performed the surgery that lasted 5 hours.

**When:      Wednesday, April 11, 2007, at 3:30 p.m.**

**Where:**      Jackson Memorial Hospital  
                    The Alamo – First Floor  
                    1611 N.W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
                    Miami, Florida

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