

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Linda Jackson, Jewish Hospital

Mary Jennings, Jewish Hospital

502-587-4230

Kathy Keadle, University of Louisville

502-852-7504

**TOM CHRISTERSON, WORLD'S SECOND ARTIFICIAL HEART PATIENT,
PASSES AWAY FEBRUARY 7, 2003**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Laman A. Gray, Jr., M.D. and Robert D. Dowling, M.D. and the entire Jewish Hospital/University of Louisville/AbioCor team are deeply saddened to confirm the death of Tom Christerson, recipient of the world's second AbioCor® Implantable Replacement Heart. Mr. Christerson was implanted on September 13, 2001.

Mr. Christerson, 71, died at Jewish Hospital at 3:15 p.m. EST surrounded by his family and a number of friends. Initial findings point to the normal wear of an internal membrane in the device. The team noticed a change in the device's performance two days ago and had been managing that change through early this morning. At that time it was evident that the device's performance could not be maintained. He was alert, oriented and visiting with family and friends until he fell asleep and died within the hour.

"We are deeply affected by Tom's death," said Dr. Gray. "We have come to know him certainly as a medical pioneer and a hero, but also as a friend. We celebrate the life he lived and the extra time he enjoyed with his family and friends."

"We extend our sympathy to the family and all those who knew and loved Tom," added Dr. Dowling. "His pioneering spirit will help many through future advancements in the treatment of heart disease."

"We have all been touched by Tom's life and death. He was a medical pioneer, a hero and a true friend to all of us here at Jewish Hospital. We not only mourn his death, but we celebrate his life. As Tom has said many times, 'This trial is not about me, this is about my children, my grandchildren, my great grandchildren and children for years to come,' " said David Zechman, CEO, Jewish Hospital Heart and Lung Institute.

The Christerson children, Patti Pryor and Ken Christerson, expressed their joy with the additional time they were able to spend together. "We enjoyed many special moments with Dad that we otherwise would not have had. Every day was gift," said Ken Christerson.

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Added Patti Pryor, “We will always miss dad, but we will always cherish each and every day of his life. People call him a hero because of the device and that’s true. But then again, he’s always been our hero,” said Patti Pryor, Mr. Christerson’s daughter.

Mr. Christerson’s family is grateful for the prayers and support they received from the community during his recovery and illness. **They ask the media to respect their privacy at this time. They will not be granting any interviews and ask that all requests go to Jewish Hospital’s public relations staff.**

The family asks that any donations in expression of sympathy be made to the Tom Christerson and Family Nursing Scholarship Fund, c/o Jewish Hospital Foundation, 200 Abraham Flexner Way, Louisville, KY 40202. Contact Keith Inman, Executive Director of the Jewish Hospital Foundation at (502) 587-4060 for more information.

Mr. Christerson’s determination and will to live helped him make great strides in his recovery and eventually return to his home. Mr. Christerson was able to achieve many special moments in the additional 17 months he lived with the device. He celebrated his 55th wedding anniversary and spent time with his great grandbaby. He enjoyed holidays with his family and friends, once more as the “official turkey taster” at Thanksgiving and as the host of an open house at Christmas. He also delighted in eating breakfast nearly every morning with his friends, and made trips to his houseboat. He enjoyed a NASCAR race, where he was able to watch his son compete.

Mr. Christerson and his family members are heroes. Their willingness to be one of the first to live with the AbioCor device could potentially pave the way for a revolutionary treatment option for advanced heart disease. As more and more people survive heart attacks, but are left with a damaged heart, the incidence of heart failure is increasing. In fact, heart failure is the only major cardiovascular disease that is rising in incidence and prevalence. The number of deaths in the U.S. from this disease has more than doubled since 1979. Once heart failure patients have reached maximum medical management of heart failure, their only option until now has been a heart transplant. Only about 2,000 heart transplants are performed each year. Potentially 100,000 people could benefit from a replacement heart when the technology is clinically demonstrated.

The experimental procedure is the result of some 20 years of product research and development by ABIOMED, Inc., of Danvers, Mass. Jewish Hospital and University of Louisville surgeons Gray and Dowling began working with the company about four years ago. During the years leading up to the human implants, the device was validated in FDA approved animal trials. A team of nurses, perfusionists, physician assistants, anesthesiologists and other support staff also worked in the development of the device to learn how to care for patients.

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