

November 5, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Linda McGinity Jackson, Jewish Hospital
502-587-4603
Kathy Keadle, University of Louisville
502-852-7504

LOUISVILLE SURGEONS UPDATE CONDITION OF SECOND ABIOCOR PATIENT

(LOUISVILLE) – The University of Louisville surgeons who implanted the world’s first and second AbioCor totally implantable hearts at Jewish Hospital today announced that the second recipient, Tom Christerson, is not progressing as well as they had hoped.

Dr. Laman A. Gray, Jr., today said, “Mr. Christerson was running high fevers last week, which spiked at 107 (degrees Fahrenheit) on Friday. It is back in a more acceptable range today – in the low 100s.”

With the fever reduced, Mr. Christerson’s kidney and liver are now functioning in a normal range. For a short time each began to fail as a result of the fever.

The surgeons are consulting with a large team of specialists to identify the source of the fever. The team - which includes infectious disease specialists, pulmonologists, neurologists, and others - has been unable to find the focal point of the fever.

“His chest x-rays and cultures have all come back 100 percent normal,” Gray continued. “There is no obvious evidence of infection.”

Over the weekend, Dr. Rob Dowling reported that the fever may be a reaction to medication, but that the team had not determined that for certain.

Mr. Christerson, who was given less than a 20% chance of surviving 30 days at the time of his surgery, had pre-existing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in addition to end-stage heart failure prior to his Sept. 13 surgery. COPD is not a contra-indication to the surgery, but raises the probability of lung-related difficulties post-surgery.

The doctors report that Mr. Christerson was returned to the ventilator last week due to general muscle weakness that made breathing difficult.

“At this point, we are treating this as an acute, reversible situation,” Gray explained. “We don’t feel that it is a problem related to the device – it has continued to work flawlessly.”

###