

Title: Automated Electronic Donor Referrals Have Increased Tissue Donation

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Background

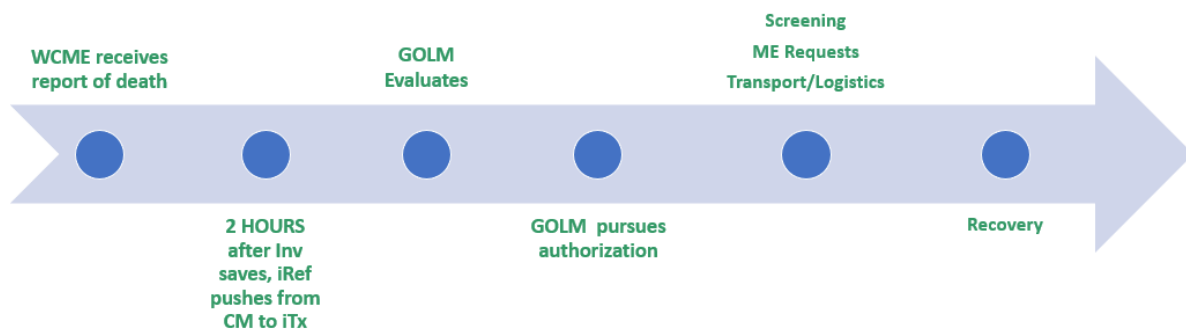
Unlike hospital deaths, out of hospital deaths are not routinely reported to the local Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) or tissue donation organization. As such, these out of hospital deaths present both a challenge and an untapped potential. At a high-volume medical examiner's office such as Wayne County Medical Examiner (WCME) in Detroit, which handles 15,000 to 16,000 death reports a year, such challenges include collecting the information needed in a timely fashion and sending it all over to their local OPO, Gift of Life Michigan (GOLM). Historically, despite the high volume of deaths and due to the logistical challenges and time-intensive process, there were not more than 7 to 8 referrals a month from WCME to GOLM (sometimes none), and not more than 3 or 4 actual tissue donations. A way to improve referrals without interrupting WCME workflow was needed.

Hypothesis

In partnership with their iTransplant® software provider InVita Healthcare Technologies (InVita), GOLM had already implemented donor referral interfaces with other ME/Coroners and seen increased referrals and donations. GOLM and InVita therefore pursued automation of electronic referrals (iReferral®) that would increase tissue donor referrals and donation at WCME.

Methods

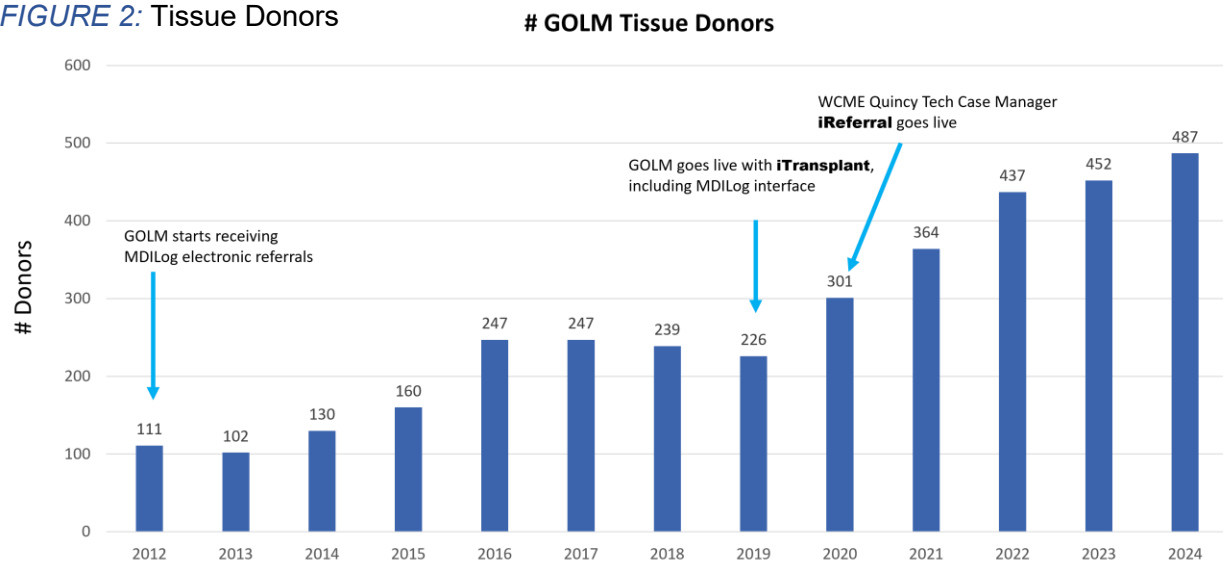
A collaborative cross functional team was formed including GOLM, InVita, WCME, and WCME's software provider Quincy Tech (provider of the ME/Coroner software, Case Manager). Within Case Manager, and upon initial documentation of the report of death by a WCME team member, a back-end 120-minute timer begins, allowing further documentation of critical data including demographic data, date-time of death pronouncement, and next of kin information. Upon completion of the timer, the referral is triggered and automatically sent electronically via interface to GOLM's iTransplant® System, creating a new referral and populating case data. Since not all pertinent information is available immediately, items like clinical history are pushed to GOLM via interface update once documented in the chart and appear in the iTransplant® case, including notification to appropriate staff.



Results

Notable positive results were apparent immediately. The software was implemented in mid-September 2020, and that month had 159 referrals. The number of tissue referrals in 2025 increased by 600% with the implementation of iReferral® since 2019, providing GOLM with significantly increased opportunity for potential donors. This has been reflected in the steady increase of tissue donors since the launch of iReferral® from 226 tissue donors in 2019 to 487 in 2024.

FIGURE 2: Tissue Donors



Conclusions

iReferral® has immediately led to increased referrals and donors, validating the hypothesis. There is unlimited potential for streamlining the ME/Coroner tissue referral process through this electronic interface, ultimately leading to more families provided the opportunity to donate, donors, and tissue recoveries.

Automated Electronic Donor Referrals Have Increased Tissue Donation



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Background

Unlike hospital deaths, which are required to be reported to the local Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) per CMS, out-of-hospital deaths are not required to be reported to (OPO) or tissue donation organization. As such, these out-of-hospital deaths represent both a challenge and an expansion of the potential donor pool.

At a high-volume medical examiner's office such as Wayne County Medical Examiner (WCME) in Detroit, which handles 15,000 to 16,000 death reports per year, challenges include timely collection of relevant information and prompt communication of that information to their local OPO, Gift of Life Michigan (GOLM).

Historically, despite the high volume of deaths, due to the logistical challenges and the time-intensive process, there were **no more than 7 to 8 referrals a month from WCME to GOLM (sometimes none) which led to no more than 3 or 4 actual tissue donations**. A way to improve referrals without interrupting WCME workflow was needed.

Hypothesis

In partnership with their **iTransplant**® software provider InVita Healthcare Technologies (InVita), GOLM had already successfully implemented donor referral interfaces with other ME/Coroners which resulted in both an increase in referrals and an increase in donors. GOLM and InVita therefore **pursued automation of electronic referrals (iReferral®)** hypothesizing that it would similarly increase tissue donor referrals and tissue donors from WCME.

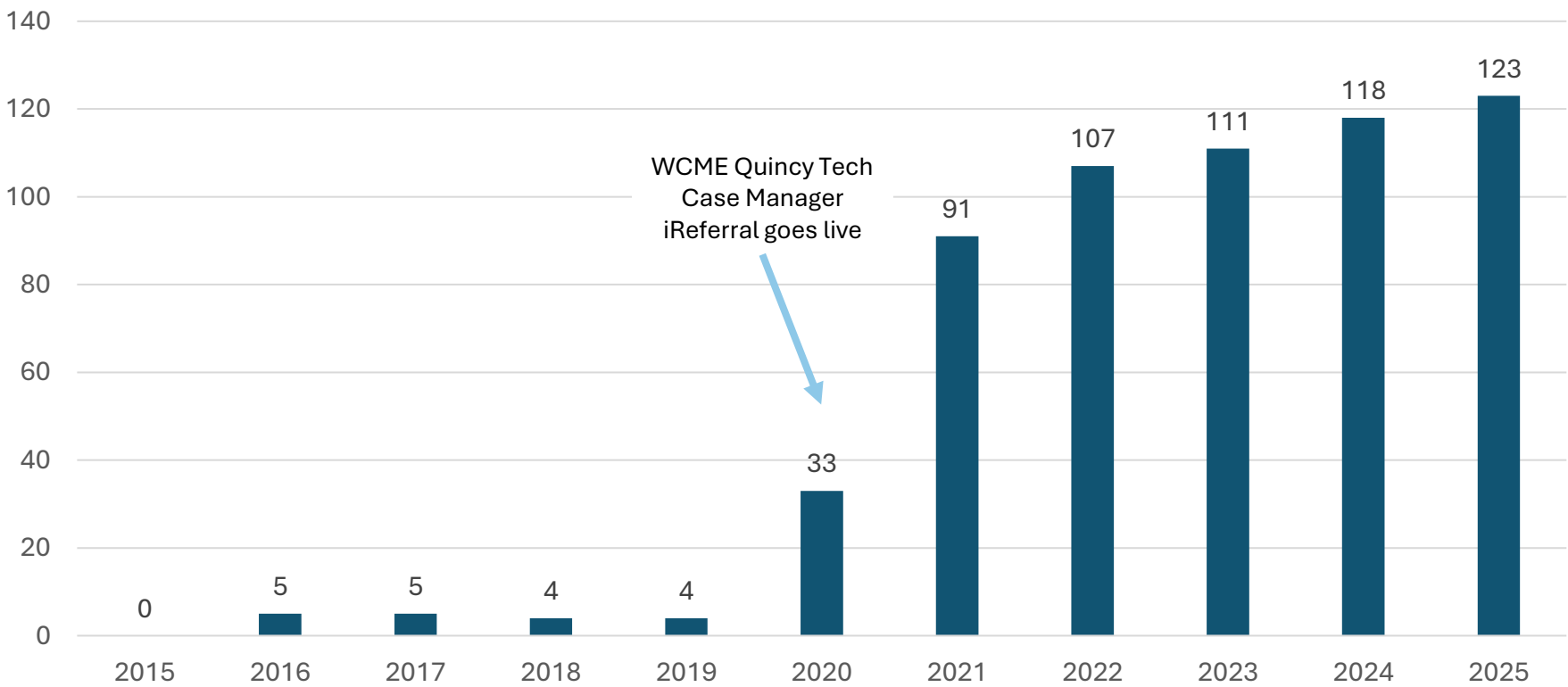
Methods

A collaborative cross-functional team including GOLM, InVita, WCME, and WCME's software provider Quincy Tech (provider of the ME/Coroner software Case Manager) worked to identify the workflow and interface details. At a high-level, within Case Manager, upon initial documentation of the report of death by a WCME team member, a back-end 120-minute timer begins, allowing further documentation of critical data prior to initial referral to GOLM, including demographic data, date-time of death pronouncement, and next of kin information. Upon completion of the timer, the **referral is triggered and automatically sent electronically via interface to GOLM's iTransplant® System, creating a new referral and populating case data**. Since not all pertinent information may be available within the first 120 minutes, items like clinical history are pushed as updates to GOLM via the interface once documented in the chart. These updates appear in the **iTransplant**® case and trigger a notification to appropriate GOLM staff.

Results

Significant positive results were achieved immediately. The interface was implemented in mid-September 2020, and from launch through the end of the year, 33 tissue donors came from WCME representing an **825% increase from 2019, in just 3.5 months**. **In 2021**, with a full year of the interface in place, as compared to 2019, the last full year prior to the interface being in-place, **there was a 2,275% increase in tissue donors**. In each subsequent year **since the launch of iReferral® at WCME**, there has been a **steady increase of tissue donors** as shown in the graph below.

Increased Tissue Donors



2025 data is annualized based on data as of August 2025

Conclusions

iReferral® immediately led to an increase in referrals and tissue donors at WCME, validating the hypothesis. Streamlining the ME/Coroner tissue referral process through this electronic interface ultimately leads to more families being provided the opportunity to donate, more donors, and more tissue recoveries.