

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Renowned Transplant Surgeon and Medical Innovator, Dr. Robert Mendez, Remembered for Lifelong Dedication to Advancing Organ Donation and Transplantation**

Los Angeles, CA – April 1, 2024 –Dr. Robert Mendez, a pioneering figure in the field of organ transplantation and organ donation, passed away on March 29, 2024, leaving behind a legacy of medical innovation and compassion. Along with his twin brother, Dr. Rafael Mendez, Dr. Robert Mendez was a worldwide pioneer in kidney transplantation and organ donation, who revolutionized the field with his expertise and dedication.

Born on March 2, 1937, Dr. Robert Mendez embarked on a remarkable career that spanned over four decades. After earning his bachelor’s degree from Stanford University and MD from the University of California, San Francisco, he pursued further training in medicine, general surgery, and urology, where his passion for kidney transplantation flourished. Dr. Mendez's contributions to the medical community were vast and impactful. He served as a tenured Professor of Urology and Surgery at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, where he also chaired and founded the Multi-Organ Transplant programs at USC University Hospital, St. Vincent Medical Center, Los Angeles, and Sharp Healthcare in San Diego.

Doctors Robert and Rafael Mendez co-founded the Southern California Organ Procurement and Preservation Center in 1977. In 1999 their vision of one recovery program to serve the region was realized with the formation of OneLegacy, a federally designated organ procurement organization that serves seven counties in Southern California and 20 million people. In 2022, OneLegacy dedicated its new 250,000 square-foot Transplant Recovery Center

to Doctors Robert and Rafael Mendez. This new state-of-the-art center allowed OneLegacy to increase organ recovery and transplantation by 25% in its first year, building on the legacy of Robert's vision and dedication to improving the science and practice of donation and transplantation.

Dr. Robert Mendez' leadership extended beyond academia; he was President of the United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS), President of the Los Angeles Urological Society, the Southern California Transplant Society, and the Western Association of Transplant Surgeons. He was a co-founder, President, and Chairman of the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation (MNIT), a renowned non-profit organization dedicated to advancing transplantation research and education.

Dr. Mendez's influence reached international levels. He was appointed by the President of the United States to sit on the National Institutes of Health Committee overseeing xenotransplantation, and he provided consultation on transplantation regulatory and governmental matters in Italy, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Mexico and Japan. He was also a leader in the establishment of the US-Mexico transplant collaboration between UNOS and Mexico's CONATRA. His expertise was sought globally, and he addressed prestigious institutions, including the Italian Parliament and the Japanese Transplant Society, to help shape national transplant laws.

Dr. Robert Mendez's commitment to advancing the science and practice of organ transplantation was unparalleled. He authored over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and 15 book chapters, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge in the field. Outside of his professional endeavors, Dr. Mendez cherished his family. He married Valerie Rosemunde Mendez in 1972, and together they raised three children. Valerie passed away in 2010, preceding Dr. Mendez in death. He is survived by his children Danielle Mendez, Robert Mendez, and Alexandra Clark, and his grandchildren Dylan, Sasha, Jasper, Hudson, Paxton, Harper, and Chloe.

Dr. Robert Mendez's impact on the world of organ transplantation, organ donation and medicine at large are immeasurable. His dedication, compassion, and groundbreaking work have saved countless lives and will continue to influence future generations of medical professionals.

A memorial service to honor Dr. Robert Mendez's life and contributions will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation in Dr. Robert Mendez's memory.

For additional information and media inquiries, please contact Thomas Mone, Chief External Affairs Officer at OneLegacy at 424-298-0229 or [tdmone@onelegacy.org](mailto:tdmone@onelegacy.org)

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