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Oley Foundation Honors Nashville Woman Who Has Thrived on IV Nutrition for 50 Years

NASHVILLE, N.Y., October 25, 2018 – For Nashville resident Sharon Rose, 2018 marked the fiftieth year that she’s received the nutrients that keep her alive almost exclusively intravenously. To date, she has survived – and thrived – on this specialized nutrition support longer than anyone else in the U.S.

Rose spoke about her experience with this life-saving treatment at the annual Oley Foundation/Clinician Conference in Memphis, Tenn., earlier this year. “I’m thankful,” she said. “I have led a full life. I was married, I have twin boys and five grandchildren, and I worked full-time as a critical care nurse.” She now enjoys an active retirement.

In 1968, after suffering from abdominal pain, Rose learned that clots had blocked the flow of blood to her small intestine, which absorbs nutrition from food. The intestine became gangrenous, ruptured and most of it had to be surgically removed. Without it, however, Rose couldn’t sustain herself through normal eating. Her doctor suggested what was then a strictly hospital-based therapy: hyperalimentation, now known as total parenteral nutrition (TPN).

TPN is a nutrient-carrying liquid that is infused directly into a patient’s bloodstream, where the nutrients, including glucose, salts, amino acids, lipids, vitamins and dietary minerals, are absorbed by the body. It is provided when the gastrointestinal tract has been surgically shortened, is nonfunctional because of an interruption such as a leak or blockage or when its absorptive capacity is impaired.

Today, many people with digestive system issues, such as the inability to swallow, a motility disorder or short bowel syndrome, require home intravenous nutrition and tube feeding to survive. But when Rose first started TPN, little was known about how to discharge a patient home on intravenous nutrition. Together, Rose’s physician and pharmacist worked to compound a solution that would provide her with the necessary nutrients. She spent years creating her own IV tubing, dealing with multiple infections and clots, and other issues.

“I have seen a lot of changes in the fifty years I have been on TPN and have seen many improvements,” said Rose. “We improve so much every year. I want us all to have hope that it’s only going to get better.”

“It took a strong commitment from Sharon and her clinical team to manage her complicated medical nutrition therapy and achieve success,” said Joan Bishop, executive director of The Oley Foundation, which helps those living with home intravenous nutrition and tube feeding through education, advocacy and networking. “She gives hope to our other members and continues to inspire others to live full lives while sustaining themselves on their medical therapy.”

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Lyn Howard and her patient, Clarence “Oley” Oldenburg, the Oley Foundation is a national, independent 501(c)(3) organization based at Albany Medical Center, Albany, N.Y., that enriches the lives of patients dependent on home intravenous (parenteral) nutrition and tube feeding (enteral) through education, outreach, and networking. The Foundation also serves as a resource for consumer’s families, clinicians and industry representatives, and other interested parties that span worldwide.