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Foreword

Of all the astonishing achievements of modern medicine, the ability to successfully transplant a living organ from one human being to another is perhaps one of the most awesome. Immunosuppressive drugs are one of the spectrum of technological advances that have made organ transplants an everyday phenomenon. At the same time, however, transplant recipients’ needs for these drugs have presented Medicare with a continuing policy dilemma, because Medicare does not usually pay for outpatient prescription drugs.

In 1984, the year after cyclosporine made its debut onto the health care market, OTA reported to Congress on the likely benefits of the drug for Medicare kidney transplant recipients. The present report, requested by the Senate Committee on Finance in the wake of the repeal of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act, examines Medicare’s current immunosuppressive drug coverage dilemma and the policy tradeoffs it entails for the 1990s.

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John H. Gibbons
Director
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James Armitage  
North American Autologous Bone Transplant Registry  
Lincoln, NE

Remy Aronoff  
U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration  
Rockville, MD

Robert Block  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association  
Chicago, IL

Carmella Bocchino  
Nursing Economics  
Washington, DC

Judith Braslow  
U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration  
Rockville, MD

Bureau of Policy Development  
U.S. Health Care Financing Administration  
Baltimore, MD

William Comanor  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
Santa Barbara, CA

Dennis Cotter  
Health Technology Association  
Washington, DC

Paul Eggers  
U.S. Health Care Financing Administration  
Baltimore, MD

Denis Grady  
Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corp.  
East Hanover, NJ

Philip Held  
Urban Institute  
Washington, DC

Tom Holohan  
Office of Health Technology Assessment  
Rockville, MD

Alan Hull  
Dallas Nephrology Associates  
Dallas, TX

Barry Kahan  
The University of Texas Health Science Center  
Houston, TX

Joel Kallich  
RAND Corp.  
Santa Monica, CA

D’Etta Waldoch Koser  
International Bone Marrow Transplant Registry  
Milwaukee, WI

Susan Laudecina  
Intergovernmental Health Policy Project  
Washington, DC

James Light  
Washington Hospital Center  
Washington, DC

Shari McCullough  
IMS America  
Plymouth Meeting, PA

William McGivney  
American Medical Association  
Chicago, IL

John Newman  
Reston, VA

Julie Ostrowsky  
Chicago, IL

Richard Rettig  
Institute of Medicine  
Washington, DC

Walter Rutemueller  
U.S. Health Care Financing Administration  
Baltimore, MD

Bernadette Schumaker  
U.S. Health Care Financing Administration  
Baltimore, MD

Linda Sheaffer  
Division of HIV Services  
Rockville, MD

Jane Sisk  
Dobbs Ferry, NY

Sandy Zachary  
U.S. Health Care Financing Administration  
Baltimore, MD
OTA Project Staff—Outpatient Immunosuppressive Drugs Under Medicare

Roger C. Herdrnan, Assistant Director, OTA
Health and Life Sciences Division

Clyde J. Behney, Health Program Manager

Project Staff
Elaine J. Power, Project Director

Diane Burnside Murdock, Contractor/Principal Analyst

Other Contributing Staff
Sharon Y. Hamilton, Research Assistant
David P. Reeker, Congressional Fellow

Administrative Staff
Virginia Cwalina, Office Administrator
Carolyn Martin, Word Processor Specialist
Eileen Murphy, P.C. Specialist