

# Dr Rainer Gruessner Honored for Medical Service during Giffords Tragedy

*Dr Rainer Gruessner oversaw the surgical management of Rep Gabrielle Giffords.*

TUCSON, AZ, USA, June 26, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Dr Rainer Gruessner](#) is a surgeon at the University of Arizona. He was appointed Chairman of the Department of Surgery in its College of Medicine in 2007 and is a tenured Professor of Surgery and Immunology. He also served as the Surgical Director of the Abdominal Transplant Programs and the Surgical Director of the school's HepatoPancreaticoBiliary Program.

[Dr Rainer Gruessner](#) was on hand in Tucson in January 2011, the day that Gabrielle Giffords and eighteen other people were shot outside of a shopping center, where the former Arizona Congresswoman was making a public appearance. Six people were killed in the shooting, including a Federal judge and a nine year old girl.

Gruessner oversaw the surgical management of the victims of the tragic shooting in Tucson, Arizona.

"This is obviously a sad day for the families, for the community, for the state of Arizona, and for the nation," [Dr Rainer Gruessner](#) told reporters at the time. "Our hearts go out to the families of the victims."

At the time of the shootings, Dr Rainer Gruessner had been at the University of Arizona for about three-and-a-half years. University of Arizona President Robert Shelton credited Dr Rainer Gruessner with building an extraordinary surgical and trauma team. "I think it's safe to say," he told reporters, "that this team is second to none."

University of Arizona President Robert Shelton, at a press conference, introduced Dr Rainer Gruessner, who told reporters that a shooting of that magnitude was an immediate emergency



Dr Rainer Gruessner made surgical history in Arizona when he performed the first intestinal (bowel) transplants from either a living or deceased donor in the Southwest.

situation for all surgeons involved and that it was difficult to be prepared for something like that. But he added that surgeons and staff worked like a clockwork.

“Within an hour, six patients were in the operating room. We had four trauma surgeons, two neurosurgeons, one cardiothoracic surgeon, and one vascular surgeon simultaneously in the operating rooms. It took 38 minutes for the most critical injured person to be transferred to the operating room.”

Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head at point-blank range, and her condition was initially described as extremely critical. When he spoke to reporters, Dr Rainer Gruessner commended the performance of the entire emergency room staff.

Gruessner went on to introduce reporters to two of his division chiefs that he had recruited, Dr. Peter Rhee and Dr. Michael Lemole, but he first commended the performance of all surgeons involved on that terrible day. “We were able to help today because of our readiness and the willingness of volunteers to support us, not just the physicians but also the entire operating room and emergency room staff. Everyone did a fantastic job. And I think our community and the state can be proud of what happened here at the hospital within a very short time.”

The gunman was arrested at the scene. His motive for the shooting was never firmly established. He was initially judged incompetent to stand trial, but after being later deemed competent, he was sentenced to life in prison.

Dr Rainer Gruessner also directed a team of surgeons who performed a rare and sophisticated organ transplant in 2009. The patient was a one year old girl who was born without a small bowel, a rare condition that made it impossible for her to digest food. Because she was completely depended on intravenous tube feeds (total parenteral nutrition, TPN), her liver subsequently failed. During a seven hour operation at the University of Arizona, she received the liver, small bowel, and pancreas of a donor patient. “By transplanting all three organs at once,” Gruessner said at the time, “we can give children with these serious intestinal diseases hope for a healthy future.”

It was the first time the procedure was performed in Arizona and the Southwestern United States. Four years later, the little girl is alive, and eating and doing well.

Dr Rainer Gruessner oversaw the surgical care of Rep Gabrielle Giffords.

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