

Organ donation week – 2 to 8 September 2019

Organ donation week, an annual campaign coordinated by [NHS Blood and Transplant](#) service, highlights the generosity of donors and the impact they have on transplant recipients, and an opportunity to educate, inform and inspire people, to help save and improve more lives.

Become a living donor

Across the UK, more than 1,000 people each year donate a kidney or part of their liver while they are still alive to a relative, friend or someone they do not know.

The most commonly donated organ by a living person is a kidney. A healthy person can lead a normal life with only one functioning kidney and therefore they are able to donate the other to help someone in need of a kidney transplant. Part of a liver can also be transplanted from a living donor to help someone in need of a liver transplant.

Why do we need more living organ donors?

In the UK, around 5,000 people are in need of a kidney transplant to transform their lives, and hundreds of patients die each year waiting for a transplant due to a shortage of organ donors.

The average waiting time for a kidney transplant from someone who has died is more than two and a half years. For some ethnic groups and people for whom it is difficult to find a compatible donor, the wait is even longer.

Raising awareness

To help raise awareness of organ donation week, David Hair from Bexleyheath, Kent recalls his journey of being a live donor for his brother Andrew Hair from Hampshire.

David said: “Little did I know how things were going to change when my brother called me one afternoon in April 2018.

We knew that Andrew had polycystic kidneys, but to hear that his kidney function was now down to 10% took us all by surprise. The renal team at Queen Alexandra Hospital (QAH), Portsmouth were now talking to Andrew about dialysis and transplant, and whether there was anyone that might step forward as a possible live donor.



David Hair

Volunteers, (or is that victims) attended QAH in May and were tested to see if they matched. Blood tests were sent off for analysis and then the wait began.

Finally I got a call to say that I was a 6 out of 6 match which was the best match of the group. With the support of my fantastic family, I became the frontrunner and the race began to get the transplant done before Andrew had to start dialysis.

I was incredibly fortunate – the wonderful renal team at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, London, agreed to do much of the testing on me to save me spending a lot of time on the M25 and A3. I spent a lot of time throughout the summer having pretty much every kind of test & scan imaginable. Guy's and St Thomas' then discovered that I had slightly elevated blood pressure which slowed things down a bit, but with the help of a small amount of Ramipril everyday things came back to normal and so we continued.

As we moved into autumn things started to become rather real – planning for a surgery date, working toward organising my life to be off the grid for 4-6 weeks, logistical issues of being in Hampshire for 2-3 weeks rather than Kent, making sure work was organised etc.

Winter came and with it a surgery date in February 2019. I met my surgeon and Andrew & I were interviewed by the Human Tissue Authority, as they approve any live donation.

Pre-admission the week before the operation and then I was driving to QAH, to be admitted. I thoroughly enjoyed being given my own 'private' room while Andrew was on the general ward! Our wives and family left and there we were sitting in my room with our snacks feeling like it was the last supper.

The next morning they wheeled me down to theatre – after which I remember nothing until I came round in recovery. Things had largely gone well and Andrew was in theatre by then. There were some hiccups with him, however he was brought back to the ward eventually and we were told that the transplant had been a success.

The next 3-5 days before we were discharged went by in a round of constant checks, monitoring, and boredom, walking around aimlessly and generally admiring how great the QAH, renal team is. They are simply brilliant and we could not have asked for better care. We then went home to Andrew's house and tried to get some semblance of normality going, which is not easy when there is so little you are allowed to do physically so that you don't split your stitches or give yourself a hernia!

As always, life continues and here we are almost six months later – I am fine, scars healed and enjoying golf again. Andrew is doing really well, he is being checked every two weeks for his drug levels, but we are both in great shape. We also have 130% kidney function between the two of us – how incredible is that?

We could not have done this without the wonderful NHS and two incredible teams at QAH, Portsmouth and Guy's and St Thomas', London. We also could not have done

it without our brilliant family, friends and colleagues. It has been an amazing experience for both Andrew & I and I hope he looks after my kidney (!!) and lives a long, happy & healthy life without interruption.

People say to me about the choice that I had – of course, there was only one choice and that was to be a live donor.”



Andrew Hair

Further information:

If you would like more information about becoming a live donor and would like to join the NHS Organ donor register, call: 0300 123 23 23 or visit the [NHS Blood and Transplant website](#).

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