

Why a Kidney “Campaign”

November 4, 2015

I need a kidney. My kidney function is near the low end (below 20%) of stage four of five stages of chronic kidney disease, and I have been on the waiting list for a cadaver transplant since April of 2015. The exact cause of my kidney disease is unknown, but contributing factors are likely to include two kidney stones (32 years apart), benign prostate enlargement, and overuse of NSAIDs (Ibuprofen and Naproxen). The most common causes of kidney disease also include diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, none of which I currently suffer from.

My blood type is O-. This is the most valuable, most in demand, blood type for donation, and I have been very popular as a blood donor. I donated some seven gallons of blood over the years. But now I need a type O kidney. Likewise, kidneys from type O donors can go to any blood type, and I will have daunting competition from the A's and B's for the type O kidney I need.

I am in excellent health apart from my failing kidney function. I would like to be able to take advantage of my family longevity. My father lived to 90, and my mother still says “I’m glad to be alive” at 104 years old.

The kidney allocation system in the United States is woefully under-supplied. Massachusetts General Hospital tells me that my wait time on the transplant list for a cadaver kidney (from a donor who has been killed in an accident or one declared brain-dead) is 6 years. Other countries do better (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2322914/>), but the point is that I have to put on a campaign to make known my need for a living donor to step forward on my behalf.

Almost everyone is born with two kidneys. A healthy adult who donates a kidney has the same life and health expectancy as anyone else because the remaining kidney will take over the function of the one donated. I know that there are amazing, generous people who feel called to make this gift of life, and I want them to know of my need. It is not easy to make such a request. Please help me by spreading the word.

You might be asking if dialysis is the answer. For a patient my age, long-term dialysis can lead to heart failure and diabetes. The six-year wait for a cadaver kidney would find me not only six years older but in vastly weakened condition. A living kidney during the next 6 months would be worth many, many kidneys six years from now.

Kidney Disease and treatment is a complex subject, and I am learning more every day. Please browse the “links and resources” (**LINK here, same as “Links” on page header**) for the basics, and feel free to call or email me with questions.

Visit my website again later for occasional updates on my condition and the kidney transplant scene.

Eric Myrvaagnes