



Empowering Lives: Navigating the Nuances of Living Kidney Donation

Ashley N. Suah, MD
Assistant Professor of Surgery, Section of Transplant Surgery
Associate Program Director, General Surgery Program
University of Chicago Medicine
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 **Interdisciplinary Nephrology Conference**

Disclosures

Nothing to Disclose

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Clinical Experience



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- Board Certified General Surgeon
- Kidney, Liver, and Pancreas Transplantation
- Donor Recovery Operations

Objectives

1. Outline the essentials of the **living donor transplant journey**, from eligibility and surgery to post-operative care, so patients and families know what to expect.
2. Share practical approaches for healthcare professionals to **establish trust with donors and recipients**, while highlighting the importance of **patients taking an active role in seeking out potential living donors** within their communities and beyond.




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Living Donor Transplant Journey



1. Introduction to Living Donation
2. Eligibility Criteria
3. The Evaluation Process
4. Informed Consent and Education
5. Pre-operative Preparation
6. The Surgery
7. Post-Operative Care
8. What Patient and Families Should Expect

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Introduction to Living Donor Kidney Transplant

- Living donor kidney transplant is the **gold standard treatment** for end-stage kidney disease with **superior outcomes** when compared with both deceased donor kidney transplant and dialysis.
- Yet, racioethnic disparities exist...

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Persistent Disparities

- Black patients receive living donor kidney transplant less frequently than White patients, despite higher prevalence of renal failure in Black individuals compared with other racial or ethnic groups.^{1,4}
- Black patients are less likely to be referred (preemptively and following initiation of dialysis) for kidney transplant evaluation than White patients.
- Once evaluated, Black patients are less likely than White patients to be added to the kidney transplant waiting list.^{2,4}


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1. McKelvey LM et al., JAMA Netw Open. 2023
2. Purcell TS et al., JAMA. 2019
3. Gordon EJ et al., Semin Nephrology. 2010
4. Gander JC et al., Clin Transplant. 2018

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Contributing Factors

- **Patient-level:** Misunderstanding, negative attitudes, low awareness, fewer suitable living donors, medical and financial barriers.
- **Community-level:** Healthcare access, educations, housing, economic stability.
- **Structural/systemic-level:** Transplant center-specific practices and policies are underexplored.




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Strategies for Bridging the Gap

- Outreach to minoritized communities for education.
- Participation in assistance and paired-exchange programs (NKR, OPTN/UNOS).
- Expand donor support (rebates for income loss and travel).
- Broaden desensitization and exchange program use.
- Mitigate bias, eliminate unnecessary race-based criteria (eGFR, APOL1).
- Use social risk data to support, not restrict, patient access.


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Moving Toward Equity in Living Donation

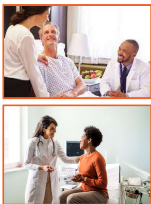
- Disparities in living donor kidney transplant are enduring and multifaceted.
- Health equity must be incorporated into reporting and payment structures.
- Transplant providers and centers must proactively address barriers.



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Complete LDKT Disparities Reference List



- McElroy LM et al., JAMA Netw Open. 2023
- Purnell TS et al., JAMA. 2018
- Gordon EJ et al., Semin Nephrology. 2010
- Gander JC et al., Clin Transplant. 2018
- Kilian AC et al., JAMA Surg. 2021
- Shirey TE et al., J Am Heart Assoc. 2019
- El-Khoury B et al., J Racial Ethn Health Disparities. 2023

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Eligibility Criteria

- Medical, surgical and psychological evaluation for donors
- Key eligibility factors (age, health status, psychological readiness)
- National guidelines and institutional policies

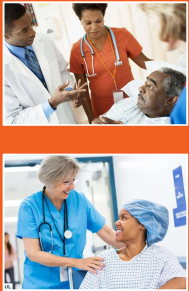


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Evaluation Process

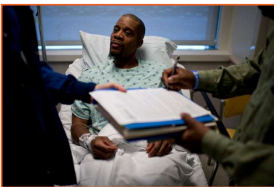
- **Initial Screening and Tests:** Blood Typing, Tissue Matching, Organ Function
- Psychosocial Assessment
- **Team Approach:** Nephrologists, Surgeons, Coordinators, Pharmacists, Psychologists, Living Donor Advocates, Social Workers, Case Managers, Nutritionists/Dieticians





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Informed Consent and Education



- Ensuring donor understands all risks, benefits, and alternatives
- Sessions on what to expect throughout the process
- Advocacy for donor autonomy



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Pre-Operative Preparation

- Scheduling the operation
- Pre-operative instructions, emotional/psychological support

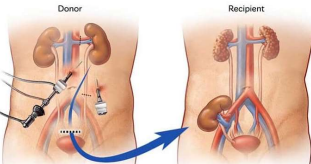




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The Operation

- **Surgical Techniques:** Laparoscopic versus Open Approach
- Hospital stay and recovery process
- Risks and expected outcomes for donors and recipients



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Post-Operative Care

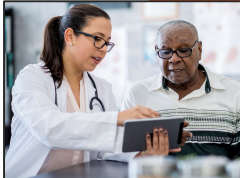
- Short-term and long-term follow-up for donors
- Physical recovery, monitoring organ function
- Mental health and psychological support
- Ongoing communication between care teams and donors



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What Patients and Families Should Expect

- Timeline from evaluation to recovery
- Common concerns and questions
- Practical tips for navigating the journey



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Establishing Trust & Encouraging Patient Initiative

1. Building Trust with Donors and Recipients
2. Practical Approaches for Social Workers
3. Patients as Advocates
4. Strategies for Expanding Donor Search
5. Ethical Considerations
6. Resources and Support Systems
7. Case Studies and Examples



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Building Trust with Donors and Recipients

- Transparent communication about risks and benefits
- Cultural sensitivity and addressing unique concerns
- Creating a supportive environment

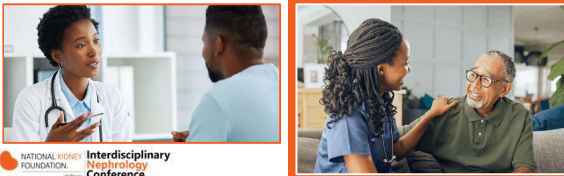


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Practical Approaches for Social Workers and All Team Members

- Active listening and validation of donor/recipient fears
- Consistent, clear information for all parties
- Facilitating peer support and sharing stories



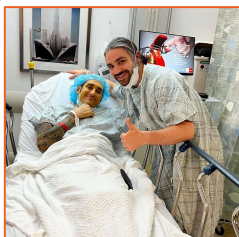
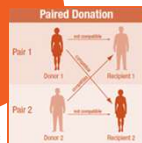
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Patients as Advocates

- Emphasize the recipient's role in seeking donors
- Guidance on starting donor conversations with family/friends
- Use of social media and outreach community networks

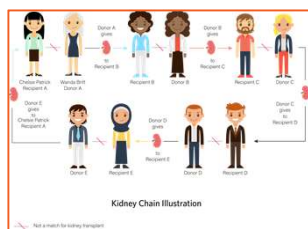
Strategies for Expanding Donor Search

1. Paired kidney exchange and donor chains
2. Engaging in faith/community groups, employers, or local organizations
3. Collaborations beyond immediate social circles



Ethical Considerations

- Voluntariness and absence of coercion
- Respecting donor autonomy throughout decision-making
- Support for living donors post-donation



Paired Kidney Exchange

Resources and Support Systems

- Hospital and community resources for donors and recipients
- Support groups, education materials, advocacy organizations



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Conclusions

- We want to ensure transplant access to all patients so they can live life to the full!
- Living donor kidney transplant is the **gold standard treatment** for end-stage kidney disease.
- Disparities in living donor kidney transplant are enduring and multifaceted – transplant providers and centers must proactively address barriers.
- Transplant operations (for the donor and recipient) have risks.
- Our goal is to help donors and recipients go through the operations with as few risks as possible.

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THANK YOU!

Questions?

Running Chicago Marathon
October 12, 2025 for the NKFI



#teamkidneyCHI



Ashley.Suah@bsd.uchicago.edu