

Georges needs a Kidney part 2

In last month's article (<http://tinyurl.com/kh6bodk>) I introduced you to Georges Kingsley, who needs a new kidney, as well as my initial efforts to understand what that entails. I summarized my first phone conversation with Azzy Anane, a Living Donor Transplant Coordinator at Hartford Hospital and how impressed I was with his knowledge and concerns.



I initially began this series in the hopes that, by spreading the word, it might inspire someone who was a match with Georges to donate a kidney and save his life.

But after talking with Azzy, I realized that I wanted to go through the process myself, and donate my kidney to Georges if I could. Potential donors have a 1 in 10 chance of being qualified, which means there's a 90% chance that I won't ever experience the surgery. However, the more I learn, the more I hope that I am accepted. And I still hope that the story of Georges and I inspires you to consider donation as well.

There are three possible ways that a person in need receives a kidney. The first is where Georges is right now: waiting on the organ recipient list. How this works is complicated, but it's very possible Georges wouldn't live long enough to see a kidney become available this way.

The second way is that someone could donate a kidney directly to Georges. This is what I have applied to do. To give him my kidney, not only do I have to be a viable donor (in good enough health, and willing) but I also have to be compatible with Georges' blood & tissue types. It may well be several months before we know, but if I meet these criteria, then we're all set: I will give him one of my kidneys.

The third way is possibly the most interesting. If I qualify as a viable donor, but I'm not compatible with Georges' blood or tissue type, I still may be able to get him a kidney.

In the past, a non-match meant disappointment, and more searching. But now the doctors will keep my blood and tissue types on file, and will search for a donor / recipient combo in the same situation—one who is compatible with Georges but who has an incompatibility

issue with their own friend or loved one. If I'm able to donate to *that* person's recipient, great! If only one set matches, then we are placed together, and the search continues, adding recipient /donor pairs to the circle until a full set of matches are found. It could involve three pairs, or it could involve 13.

Once the donors and recipients are identified, all of the surgeries and related logistics are scheduled. This process requires a great deal of effort, but it means that multiple recipients are all able to receive new kidneys, as long as someone is willing to donate on their behalf.

I'm conflicted as to whether I'm hoping to be a direct donor or part of a paired exchange.

When you think about it, the second scenario expands the number of lives saved, by possibly quite a few people. That could be a really good day for a lot of kidney recipients.

So far I have filled out and returned four documents and read a couple others, and subsequently had a second phone call with Azzy: a half hour phone interview they have with all potential donors. In that interview Azzy reviewed the answers on my questionnaire, clarified verbally some of my answers, and in the end concluded that I could still pursue being either a direct donor or part of a paired exchange. First test passed.

The second test was Thursday morning when I had about 16 vials of blood taken to be sure there are no conditions preventing donation and to find out my compatibility status.

I won't have the results of that for about a week, so after this gets published, I'll update on Facebook and via the Redtruckstonecatcher.com blog.

Bernie Michel