

Quality Insights Renal Network

Me, too! Campaign **Increasing Transplant Referral Campaign** **for Patients \geq 65 Years Old**

Patient-to-Patient Story

My name is Jack Thomas and I live in Mars, Pa with my wife Annabelle. I would like to share how it came about that I received a kidney transplant on June 18, 2013.

It all began when I went to my primary care physician for a simple annual check-up at age 73. The doctor suggested I have a creatine test. I had never heard of such a test before. The results of this test indicated my kidneys were failing and I would eventually have to go on dialysis. Annabelle and I did not know what dialysis was. After the doctor explained exactly what dialysis was and what was all involved with the treatments, we felt it was something we did not want to go through. When Annabelle asked the Doctor what would happen if I did not go on dialysis, he looked straight at us and said, "Jack would die." We were in shock. As we look back now, we realize this honest answer was the best thing to help us realize the reality we were facing.



Ultimately, I did begin dialysis treatment in 2008 at Seven Fields Dialysis Clinic. I must say it was an overall good experience because of the dedicated nurses and technicians that gave my treatment every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. I also knew in my heart that by having a good healthy, positive attitude, it would be best for me as well as for many others sitting around me facing the same problem.

After being on dialysis and getting into a routine, I was thrilled to find out I would not be deprived of enjoying life while I was on dialysis. During the five years I was on dialysis, I was still able to leave for our annual trip to Florida for five months each year. My home clinic here in Pennsylvania made all the arrangements with the clinic in Florida in advance of my arrival. I simply had to walk in for my treatment on Tuesday and on with my life in Florida.

Everything changed on June 18, 2013. On that day, while receiving treatment at the Seven Fields clinic, I received a telephone call from Allegheny General Hospital (A. G. H.). They told me they had a "perfectly matched kidney" from a nine year old boy and I should come to the hospital immediately after my treatment. They assured me I would have a new kidney before the end of the day. I cried when I heard this news. Knowing that someone had lost a loved one but had sacrificially given me another opportunity at living life to the fullest even at my age brought me to tears.

My transplant surgery was on a Tuesday. When the doctors saw my wife and I walking the halls of the hospital two days after surgery had been performed, they were amazed at how well I was doing. I was discharged by Saturday. During my time of recovery at home, I had weekly blood work drawn and sent to the hospital, I had a monthly check up with the doctor at A. G. H. and I began a strict regimen of required medications which I took faithfully. And now, just ten months after my kidney transplant, I'm out mowing the lawn and actually doing everything I did before but just a little slower. (Maybe at age 84 that could be expected.) My wife and I had struggled with the transplant referral steps but with encouragement from the nurses, social workers, and doctors we decided to take a leap of faith. Looking back, we had made the right decision.

I must express my gratitude and thanks for the many prayers from friends and family. It is because of our deep faith in God that He has been with us through this whole journey. Thank you for asking me to share this very vital and wonderful part of my life. I trust this may encourage someone else with a similar situation and experience.

--John W. Thomas (Jack)

Statement: To file a grievance, please contact Quality Insights Renal Network 4 at: Patient Toll Free Line: 1-800-548-9205, www.qirn4.org, 630 Freedom Business Center, Suite 116, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

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