

Non-Directed Living Kidney Donors

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ISSUE

How are non-directed donors (also known as Good Samaritan or altruistic donors) evaluated?

DATA

Non-directed donors (NDDs) are individuals who choose to donate a kidney without knowing at the time of their evaluation who will receive their kidney. While most live donors have a close relationship to their intended recipients, some live donors identify a specific recipient with whom they initially have no biological or emotional relationship. This relationship may begin in several ways, including social media (e.g., Facebook), websites that link donors and recipients (e.g., MatchingDonors.com) or community solicitation (e.g. a church posting or a billboard). Such situations would still be considered a directed donation, but because of the distant relationship between donor and recipient, many centers treat them as NDDs. Many NDDs choose to remain anonymous throughout the entire process while others may initiate a relationship either before or after- donation.

Despite initial hesitation by the transplant community to accept non-directed donors, more and more programs are now accepting NDDs: 8% in 1989, 15% in 1994, 38% in 2000, to 61% of programs in 2007.⁽¹⁾ Nondirected donors can donate directly to the waitlist or initiate a chain of transplants through kidney paired donation. Without non-directed donors, kidney paired donation would not be possible for many incompatible donor-recipient pairs. For the donor, time to donation is quicker when it is directly to the list, as setting up chains takes longer. NDDs generally do very well and we now know that most NDDs are psychologically stable and have pure altruistic motivations.⁽²⁾

Evaluation

All potential living donors, directed or nondirected, undergo a comprehensive medical evaluation. In addition, an in-depth psychosocial evaluation must be performed by a psychiatrist, psychologist, MSW social worker, or licensed clinical social worker.⁽³⁾ Findings from a 2006 guidelines meeting in Washington, D.C, suggest that non-directed donors should be more carefully scrutinized to ensure they are knowledgeable, have good motivations, and are at minimal psychological risk.⁽⁴⁾ Opinions differ among centers as to whether a “timeout” period should be indicated when evaluating non-directed donors, and whether there should be

minimum age requirements above that of traditional donors.

Outcomes

Recent studies suggest that the overall outcomes for non-directed donors are similar to that of emotionally related donors ⁽⁵⁾. Most non-directed donors report emotional and personal benefits from donation and maintain pre-donation quality of life, even though they do not benefit directly from the recipient's improved well being ⁽⁶⁾.

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Note: The recommendations in these chapters are the opinions of the Living Donor Community of Practice of AST. They are not meant to be prescriptive and opinions by other groups or institutions may be equally valid.