

## Organ donation

**In 2006 my common-law partner was fortunate to have a liver transplant.** Watching his health decline to the point where he couldn't get out of bed was horrific. I clearly remember on a weekly basis, for close to 8 months, both his liver specialist and I touching base with the Edmonton transplant team as to how sick he was. When we got the phone call that there was a liver for him we were in Edmonton within 2 hours. Not only is it totally stressful waiting for an organ donor but the financial part is also very stressful. I remember being emotionally overwhelmed and not being able to stop crying when the transplant surgeon in Edmonton told me the transplant surgery was successful. How could I ever thank the person who died and gave me an extended period of time with my spouse – it is indescribable. Both my spouse and I wrote separate letters to the organ donors family thanking them for the liver donation gift of their loved one and how our lives were affected by it, we even received 1 letter from the family in return.

I was diagnosed 10 years with a liver disease (primary biliary cirrhosis). It is an auto-immune disease. My medication prolongs the disease but the disease, itself, will not go away. I was advised by my liver specialist about 4 months ago that **I will need a liver transplant in 2-3 years**. This is totally scary for me. Knowing what I know of the organ donation program, I am not hopeful.

**Something needs to be done so that people get educated about how lives are affected.** Whether it be the life of the person receiving a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance of life or the lives of loved ones.

I like the concept of organ donation being mandatory unless they sign otherwise.

I like the idea of social workers or registered nurses in the hospitals asking critically ill patients or families of patients of organ donation.

What about having a booth at various charity events? I realize that the Relay for Life event is about raising money for cancer research but at the same time, reality is reality, not everyone is going to survive cancer.

What about a commercial? It could be an actual person waiting for a transplant or even better it can be an actual person who had a transplant and tells a little as to how their life has changed with the 2<sup>nd</sup> chance that they have received. I think when people have a visual of a person and hears their short story it is more real for them. Such as, my name is Sharon. I have an auto-immune liver disease and am waiting for a liver transplant. My name is Sharon. I had a liver transplant and am now able to live my life instead of being bed-ridden. I get to watch my grandchildren grow up, etc.

Sharon Melnyk