

## Invited Article

### Tough Times Do Not Last, Tough People Do

**Bharath Kumar, Liver Transplant Recipient, Tumkur, India**  
**Jaya Jairam, MOHAN Foundation, Mumbai, India**



Mr. Bharath Kumar

#### Background & Career

Born in Tumkur, Karnataka, 33-year-old Bharath Kumar came from an agricultural family background. He earned his diploma in Mechanical Engineering from Tumkur district, after which he pursued an engineering degree from Mangalore. He began his career as an associate engineer for a company in Bengaluru. His diligence and dedication earned him a promotion to Senior design engineer and thus began his career with a lot of great opportunities, which in turn opened the doors for him to travel to the United States on various assignments and training.

#### Beginning of Health Challenges

In 2010, one fine day, he was rushed to the hospital with complaints of severe abdominal pain. The doctors detected ureteral stones in his kidneys and he was advised to have the stones removed ureteral stone blasting. During this procedure, he was diagnosed with Portal hypertension (increased pressure in the portal vein, which carries blood from digestive organs to the liver) and liver related concerns were highlighted. He was put on some medications and was told not to worry as it was not life-threatening.

Life went on and in 2012, during one of his health checkups, Bharath's ANA (Antinuclear Antibody) test came positive. Around this time, he faced several health complications including high blood sugar and frequent urination. After undergoing more tests, he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and he was put on insulin for management of blood sugar levels. Bharath managed to balance work and health in spite of the ups and downs.

Around 2017, Bharath began to notice that his stomach was getting enlarged. He was advised to regularly undergo ascitic fluid tapping for draining the fluid. Visits to hospitals and check-ups became more frequent. During 2019, when he was in United States, on a work assignment, he began noticing edema

(swelling caused by water accumulation) on his body and experienced severe abdominal pain. He immediately underwent tests in a hospital in US and the doctors there gave him medications, while also suggesting that he return to India immediately and pursue treatment under his doctors.

#### Turmoil & Liver Transplant

Bharath rushed back to India and his doctors diagnosed that his liver was decomposed and that he would need a liver transplant. Since Aug 2019, Bharath's life was in a turmoil, with frequent hospital admissions, tapping procedures and hospital bills that cost him a fortune. Being the sole breadwinner of the family, Bharath was terrified of the mounting financial crisis and his deteriorating health condition. He also suffered hypoglycemia around this time.

The estimated cost of a liver transplant was clearly beyond his means and Bharath was at loss as to how to go about it. Fortunately, help poured in from his friends, who started a crowd funding campaign on Milaap for meeting his transplant costs. Meanwhile, Bharath continued to suffer from fungal and urinary infections. At this point, Bharath's doctors gave him 2 months' time, within which he had to undergo a liver transplant.

He registered himself on the waiting list for a liver transplant and began a painful wait. At a stage in his life, where he had begun to lose all hopes, one of his friends came forward, like an angel, to donate a part of her liver. Even though all the criteria for the donation were met and the donor was a match, he suffered from recurring infections, due to which his transplant had to be delayed and these caused him setbacks – emotionally, financially and mentally.

He was running out of time and he needed the liver transplant immediately. On 30th August 2019, Bharath underwent the liver transplantation at Aster Medcity, under Dr. Rajiv Lochan and Dr. Mathew Jacob's team at Cochin. A few months after the transplant, he started noticing great improvements in his health and he began to feel much better. He gradually resumed all normal life activities.

#### It is not over yet – Kidney and Pancreas Transplant

Bharath was grateful that the worst was behind him, and that he could enjoy the pleasures of leading an ordinary and healthy life. Little did he know what lay ahead. Around Jan 2021, complications relating to type 1 diabetes began bothering him. He developed edema on his legs and his creatinine levels were quite high. After a kidney biopsy, his doctors informed him that the complications were caused by diabetic nephropathy. Dr. Vishwanath S, Nephrologist at Manipal Hospitals, Bengaluru suggested that Bharath would have to undergo a combined kidney and pancreas transplant.



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Bharath was tired – tired of fighting. Yet he knew that giving up was not an option. The responsibility of clearing the huge pile-up of loans, taken for his previous treatment, lay squarely on his shoulders and he did not want to burden his parents with it. During this time, his friends were a great source of motivation and gave him a lot of courage to take it as another challenge.

He began researching on the internet and could not find much information about similar cases in India. He decided to undergo the combined kidney-pancreas transplant and registered himself at KIMS Hospital, Hyderabad as suggested by his doctor. He was determined to fight for life and decided to keep the worries at bay, while keeping himself in positive spirit. Once again, his friends raised money for him through crowd funding platforms. Meanwhile, Bharath's health continued to experience rough patches with symptoms of vomiting, loss of appetite and fatigue. He had to be provided nutritional supplements through a syringe that ran inside through his stomach, followed by dialysis. "My doctors kept encouraging me all the time and the prayers of my family and friends kept me going, I suppose", shares Bharath.

Soon, their prayers were answered and Bharath got a call from the KIMS Hospital about getting kidney and pancreas from a deceased donor. He rushed to Hyderabad and after a battery of tests, Bharath was informed that the organs were a match. On December 12, 2021, Bharath underwent kidney and pancreas transplantation under Dr. Ravichand C Siddachari, coordinated by transplant coordinator Yuvraj Boopathi. "Each and every time I go to the final stages of death and come back", shared Bharath, ruefully.

After the initial hitches, post-transplant, his body began to settle gradually. At the time of this interview, a month into his transplant, Bharath is rehabilitating himself into his normal day to day activities.

#### Gratitude

"I have won the battle multiple times and it was not at all easy. I am extremely grateful for these second chances. I can't thank my family, friends, donors and doctors enough, for giving me hope and support when I needed them the most. Without them, I couldn't have done it", said Bharath, with a look of gratitude in his eyes.



Living with liver failure



After liver transplant

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