

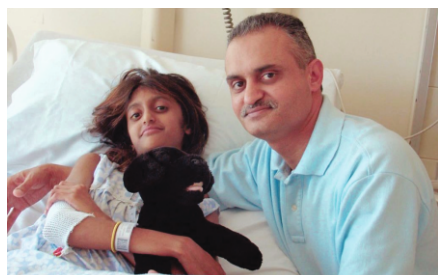
Recipient Story

In the generous act of one, my life found a new dawn

Karishma Mistry, New York, USA



Karishma Mistry (28)



Karishma with her father

"In the generous act of one, my life found a new dawn. To my unknown hero, with every heartbeat, I am overwhelmed with gratitude."

I was born with a liver disease called biliary atresia which led me to having a liver transplant. I always knew I would need a transplant but the timing of it was unknown. Getting a transplant as a newborn is extremely tough and finding a donor is equally as difficult, so we hoped my health could be managed until I was older and stronger.

Growing up I was a relatively healthy and normal kid; besides the fact that I had to take medications, no one could tell I had an illness or was any different. At the age of about 10, my health started to severely deteriorate, and it was determined that I was nearing my time and needed a new liver. I was put on the transplant waiting list on March of 2006 and we started our search for a potential donor. Unfortunately, out of my family members and close friends who were willing to donate, no one was a perfect match; my mother was only a partial match, and we did not want to risk a possible rejection. So, all we could do was hope, pray, and wait for some miracle to happen.

Luckily, one night at the end of May we received a phone call stating that they may have found a perfect liver match for me. We tried not to get our hopes up as after more thorough testing, the donor, who was a deceased donor, may not turn out to be a match for me but initially the prospect looked promising. We quickly packed up the car as my transplant center was a 3-hour drive away from my home and started the journey to what could be a new life for me. Upon my arrival, we did all the testing and a few hours later it was final that this donor was a perfect match for me. After what felt like a never-ending cycle of gaining and losing hope since my childhood, one transplant, six days in the intensive care unit, and twenty-eight hospital days later, I was given a second chance at life.

Leading a Normal Life

Since then, I have been an extremely normal and healthy child; I started school again and was living just as any other kid my age. I have been lucky to not have any

complications post-transplant and am on just a minimal dose of immunosuppressant medications. By keeping up with my medications, eating healthy, and exercising, I am no different than any other person and am able to live a normal life. After much thought and a long road, I also decided to pursue medicine as my career path. I am now in my final year of medical school and am going to be a doctor in just a few short months!

Ambassador for 'Gift of Life'

Once I got older, I understood the reason I am alive today was because someone decided to donate their organs after death. This led me to get increasingly involved with promoting organ donation with different organizations in the USA such as Donate Life America and more recently with MOHAN Foundation in India. My work throughout college with LifeSource consisted of giving talks to nursing students, educating high school students on what organ donation means, and sharing my story with other healthcare professionals at various events throughout the area. Most recently, I was invited by MOHAN foundation to talk to fellow transplant recipients and share my story on how I have managed to live an absolutely normal life and continue achieving my dreams without fear.

Furthermore, in medical school, I realized there was no formal learning objective on organ donation in the USA and Canada. After many meetings and talks with our education board, I was able to get the topic of "organ donation" added as an objective for all medical students at my school. I continue to spread the word of organ donation on social media constantly.

I have been so fortunate in my entire journey and am lucky to have had two doctors as parents taking care of me as well. Without the support of my family and without the intention of someone to donate their organs, I would not have been able to survive to this stage in my life. I will forever be grateful for my donor and for the chance to continue my life. I hope that in my future career as a doctor I am able to continue to spread my story to increase awareness for organ donation while also connecting with recipients and empowering them to achieve their dreams and goals.

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