

Powerful Patient, 2009 week 26

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The Gift That Heals

Joyce's guest is Reg Green, author of "Gifts That Heal." Fifteen years ago, seven-year-old Nicholas Green was killed by highway robbers in 1994 while vacationing in Italy with his family. His parents, Reg and Maggie Green, agreed to donate his organs and corneas, which went to seven Italians waiting for transplants, four of them teenagers.



Reg Green

1) About Reg Green

Reg Green is the father of Nicholas Green, a seven-year-old California boy, who was shot in Italy in a botched robbery in 1994 during a family vacation. The decision by Reg and his wife, Maggie, to donate his organs and corneas -- which went to seven Italians, four of them teenagers -- led people all over the world to think seriously about organ donation for the first time. In Italy alone organ donation rates have tripled so that thousands of people are alive who would have died. "It seems clear that one small boy changed the thinking of an entire nation," Green says. All seven of Nicholas' recipients are alive and, generally, very healthy.

The Greens (www.nicholasgreen.org) have produced ground-breaking documentaries that are shown in schools, hospitals and church groups across the US, written numerous articles, given speeches to audiences of all kinds and been interviewed by the media around the world. A made-for-television movie, "Nicholas' Gift," starring Jamie Lee Curtis, was made of their story. "Reg Green has done more for organ donor awareness than anyone else in the entire world," says Howard Nathan, executive director of the Gift of Life Donor Program.

Born in Britain, he was a feature writer and reporter for the London *Daily Telegraph*, the London *Times* and the *Guardian*. He has written two books on organ and tissue donation, "The Nicholas Effect" and "The Gift that Heals."

The Greens, who live in La Cañada, California, have a 19-year-old daughter, Eleanor, and 13-year-old twins, Laura and Martin.

2) About Transplantation

We never know when we might be in need of an organ transplant, or if we might some day be in a position to donate an organ.

Please consider signing the organ donor card at the Registry of Motor Vehicles to express your willingness to be an organ donor should the opportunity arise. It is important too to let your family and friends know how you feel. If the occasion should arise, it will make it easier for your family to agree to donate, knowing that was what you wanted.

You will find answers to most of your questions online at one of the two following sites. If you have additional questions, please feel free to call to inquire.

<http://www.nicholasgreen.org>
<http://www.unos.org/>
<http://www.donatelife.org/>

Nicholas Green Foundation
United Network for Organ Sharing
A new organization helping to educate the public

If you have a friend who needs a kidney, live donors give the best chance of success, and make an incredible impact on the recipient's health. It is worthwhile to go through the evaluation process to see if you would be a suitable donor. There is a separate team of doctors for the donor than for the recipient, so that each team is charged with doing what is best for that person. The doctors will not do anything that would harm the long-term health of the donor, so you can be assured that if there are any issues that should tell you not to donate, you will learn them during the evaluation.

In the case of donation at death, you and your family can specify what donations you are willing to make, and how quickly the body should be returned for funeral services, including an open casket funeral.

If you could save eight lives with the stroke of a pen, would you do it?

Please consider signing that organ donor card and making your wishes known to your family and friends.

3) Organ Donation and Religion

Most religions see organ donation as the ultimate act of charity. For a collection of statements about the stance of religious groups concerning organ donation, please see this page on the UNOS website:

<http://www.unos.org/news/newsDetail.asp?id=236>

4) What if I have a serious medical condition?

People with VHL have often asked whether they should sign that organ donor card, knowing that their kidneys would likely not be suitable for transplant.

The opinion of the VHL Family Alliance Medical Advisory Board has been that you should please sign that organ donor card anyway. The decision about the suitability of an organ for

transplant is always made at the point in time when the occasion arises, and is based on the full medical situation of the donor and the potential recipient.

Even if a particular organ might not be suitable, other organs and tissues might be life-saving gifts. Please allow the doctors in question to make the evaluation if and when the time comes.