



Health Awareness

Raising Kidney Transplant Awareness

(NAPSA)—Kidney failure is the most common reason for a kidney transplant. Blacks are at a greater risk for end-stage kidney disease because of higher-than-average rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and other immunologic factors. Even though higher numbers of black patients may be candidates for a kidney transplant, they typically wait longer for a compatible kidney donor. Why are blacks, who are more likely to need a kidney transplant, having a harder time finding a suitable kidney? Overall, there are less suitable organs available, and blacks are more likely to fall into a higher-risk category.

There is something that you can do about it. Learn more about organ donation and talk to your doctor about kidney health.

Organ Donation

According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), there are more than 73,000 patients awaiting kidneys on the U.S. transplant waiting list, with over 25,000 representing the

According to the NKF, the five primary reasons influencing low donorship among the black community are:

- Lack of transplant awareness
- Myths and misconceptions about transplantation
- General distrust of the medical community
- Fear of premature declaration of death after signing a donor card
- Fear of potential preference for races other than African American.



black community.

Organ donation can come in two forms, either from living or nonliving donors. Healthy people with two functioning kidneys can donate to a person in need and still enjoy a normal lifestyle. Transplants from living donors have considerable advantages over transplants from nonliving donors. A kidney from a living donor will usually function immediately and may last longer. By comparison, some nonliving donor kidneys do not function right away, and the patient may need dialysis until the

kidney starts to function.

Treatments

If you receive a kidney transplant, your body knows that the new kidney is not an original part of your body. Your body will attack the new kidney and try to damage or destroy it. Almost everyone who has a transplant must take drugs called immunosuppressants every day to stop this from happening. Immunosuppressant drugs lower your body's ability to attack or "reject" your newly transplanted kidney. Regular checkups at your transplant center will help to spot any problems and start treatment before a problem gets worse. The good news is that treatments have come a long way.

For more information on organ transplant and kidney donation, visit the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Web site at www.kidney.org. The most important thing is to talk to your doctor about ways you can take care of yourself. Don't be afraid to discuss kidney health and organ donation with your doctor.