

By Mary Beth Barry - In January 2012, I was told I had end-stage renal failure, better known as kidney failure. What a body blow that was. Kidney failure is the silent killer; mine even more so than others. My kidney failure was diagnosed as being “idiopathic” which is a fancy word for “unknown cause”. The doctor who delivered my bad news was not optimistic. He led me to believe my only option was hemodialysis, with my life expectancy probably shortened significantly. I was stunned! Fortunately, I then went to UCLA for a second opinion from Drs. Minhtri Nguyen and Huma Hasnain. They both were very warm and treated me with respect and empathy. They too diagnosed kidney failure, but they gave me reason to have some hope for the future. They referred me to another UCLA physician, Dr. Anjay Rastogi. Thank God for their referral!

Dr. Rastogi and his dedicated his team changed my trajectory. He explained that there was an alternative to in-center hemodialysis – it’s called peritoneal dialysis (“PD”). I could do PD at home, every day, at night as I slept. Up until then, my husband and I had lived an active life; I was still working full time, with a challenging job. Hemodialysis looked like it would shut that down. PD is doesn’t restore your life, but it was less restrictive than hemodialysis. With PD, I could still be active -- I could work and travel. Dr. Rastogi also made sure that I knew how important it was to get on UCLA’s transplant recipient list ASAP. Without their guidance, I would have been clueless. Dr. Rastogi and his team offered hope, encourage, assistance, AND his cell phone number!

The VIP of Dr. Rastogi’s team is Joe Njue. He’s an RN, but that professional title doesn’t do him justice. He’s so much more – counselor, trainer, resource, emergency contact, and friend. Joe was responsible for introducing us to PD and hemodialysis options, and then training us on the PD machine I chose (“Fresenius Cycler”). He adapted his own daily schedule so that I could have the PD training after my work hours. When my training was over, he was the point-man for any problems or concerns that I had. Once, he arranged for us to receive extra supplies because I underestimated my monthly needs. Another time, we went to Oakland & forgot the PD machine’s power cord. Joe found another DaVita center where we picked up a cord for the week. Wow!!!! I saw a lot of Team Rastogi during my 4 ½ years on PD. On every visit, they took the time to chat with me and learn how I was doing!! They certainly appreciated what I was going through. One of the team members was also on PD, and was a kidney recipient recently. But, things were starting to look like I would be on PD for the rest of my life because I was 70, and no one in my family was a suitable match. On December 16, 2016, I received the transplant call I never expected to receive – I had a match! A young man who died suddenly had previously decided to be a donor. This is a perfect example of “giving forward”.

I am now 8 months post-transplant surgery, and loving every moment of it. I exercise every day (9 mile walk today), and feel blessed by my donor’s altruistic gift and the supporting care of Team Rastogi.

Dr. Rastogi is a recognized leader in this field, but he is more than an academician. He is a solicitous, caring, thoughtful professional, who will do his utmost to see that you have the best care possible for your kidney issue. His dedicated focus on kidney research and treatment promises to change how we look at and treat kidney disease, before and after the “end stage” diagnosis. Support it if you can. He needs your assistance.

Please - make sure your driver’s license reflects your willingness to give forward! Be a donor! And a special, deep, sincere, heart-felt “Thank you” to my donor and his family. May God bless him & you, and keep you close.