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The Gift Of Life: The Reality Behind Donor Organ Retrieval



Synopsis

"Organ transplants are a very controversial and unique area of medicine. Those of us who work as Transplant Coordinators were frequently referred to by hospital staff as 'organ vultures' behind our backs, but also many times within earshot. I felt this reference to extremely ugly birds was unfair and short sighted. I did say once in a while to a difficult staff person, 'if your kid needed a transplant wouldn't you hope that someone was out there being as ethically aggressive about finding an organ as they can?' That usually shut them up quickly." -- from the Foreword

One of the miracles of modern medicine is the ability of surgeons to transplant organs. Often, it's the only way to save the life of a person whose own kidneys, lungs, liver or heart are failing. But with barely 2 percent of critically ill patients suitable for organ donation, the demand far exceeds the number of organs that become available. The Gift of Life is about the remarkable world of organ transplant coordinators, profiles of the men and women who locate and arrange for the donation of organs from those who are dying and wish to live on in others' bodies through this selfless gift. Traci Graf tells the riveting story of this unique and demanding branch of medicine. Transplant coordinators review the medical files and charts on all patients whose condition is so severe that they are not expected to live. Their task is to convince the patient (or the patient's family) to allow organs to be donated immediately upon death. The transplant coordinator works to save lives by finding and obtaining consent for as many organ donations as possible. In The Gift of Life, transplant coordinator Traci Graf recounts the stress, drama and joy of working long hours dealing with emotionally distraught family members and overworked medical staff, and the emotional toll of a job that means the difference between life and death for the recipients. Packed with riveting first person narrative, The Gift of Life will appeal to anyone interested in modern medical practice and the lives and challenges faced by nurses and doctors who work to offer critically ill patients the gift of life thanks to donors' foresight and generosity.

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Customer Reviews

In her account of her time putting together organ and tissue procurement from deceased donors in 152 hospitals, Graf, 43, imparts some of the medical finesse required to deal with the complexities of transplant, and heart-wrenching recollections of cases that remain with her. (Barbara Turnbull Toronto Star 2017-03-18) Drawing on her experience as a transplant coordinator, the author leads the reader through the modern world of organ transplants. Even in states like New Jersey where the law strongly encourages donation, demand for organs will always be much larger than the supply, and the time critical nature of organ harvesting places additional pressures on those involved, from recipients, medical staff and the soon-to-be-bereaved. Although the work begins clinically with the definition of brain death, the author acknowledges that the process is inherently emotional, presenting ethical quandaries even professionals may struggle with. These issues are explored through a series of anecdotes, and while the author is clearly on the pro-donation side, the book does not shortchange the challenges [faced by] the families of the donors. The author's prose is straightforward and clear; professional jargon does not sabotage clarity. The context is quite specific, not just American but East Coast, but Graf does a competent job of using particular experiences to fuel larger conversation. One flaw may be the book's brevity. At just over 200 pages, there are profound limitations to the depth to which the author can explore the issues; some readers may come away wanting more. (Publishers Weekly 2014-03-24) Seriously, the book should be read by anyone contemplating becoming an organ donor, any of the 121,274 folks waiting on the transplant list, or family and friends of the former. Scratch that, this book should be read by anyone looking to make a lasting gift... With Graf's intense review of the transplant procurement and transition process we are allowed to contemplate the feelings of organ recipients, organ donor families, and even occasionally, the clinical staff. (Roberta E. Winter New York Journal of Books 2014-02-16)

Registered Nurse and first time author Traci Graf has worked in several unique areas of medicine. Starting with a 16-year career as an Operating Room nurse; then moving to nursing in a Psychiatric

Emergency Room (Crisis Response Center); followed by a career as a Transplant Coordinator and now as a home health care Case Manager. She enjoys being an RN and helping empower patients to take control of their healthcare. She lives with her family in Merritt Island, Florida.

I loved this book! Traci Graf RN recounts her experiences as a Transplant Coordinator in a compelling little book. Each chapter is short and holds your attention. While the author isn't the best writer, the fast pace and suspense of her storytelling makes up for the run-ons and odd punctuation. And that's ok because she's not a writer by profession. By the way, I had purchased this book for a little research paper. I had only intended to skim bits and pieces of it, but I ended up reading the whole book. Highly recommend.

Very good insight into all that goes into transplanting organs.

An excellent book that explains and helps the public understand more about organ donation. The author takes the reader on a journey into the hospital where lives are forever changed.....her words and stories are inspiring, especially helping write my own living will. I've said yes to being an organ donor. For many years.....now I know more and understand just how important this is.

As a retired trauma surgeon I can appreciate what goes on in brain death....the angst, heartache, family meetings and tears, intense work of the nurses and coordinators and finally, if all criteria were met, the donation. Chevron was a thirteen year old child and my first loss. He went on to give better life to five children by donation. Traci put into words my thoughts and feelings. Very powerful book which should be read.

Very informative and wonderfully written! It helped me to understand what happened when my 18 year old daughter became an organ donor just 3 months ago. Traci Graf gives factual accounts of different people who in their death unselfishly gave gifts to others. Thank you Traci for dispelling myths and explaining just what happens when someone gives the gift of life. Jen

This book is amazing, obviously Ms. Graf has a gift for writing. As an RN I can really identify with this story. The heart wrenching stories of the families involved in organ donation are expertly shared. The writing makes the reader feel like she is a part of the story. I am so impressed by the transplant coordinators and the other staff that make organ donation possible. I did not want the

book to end and I can't wait for her next book.

Interesting and from the heart of the author but not so well written.

Great book for those of us (caregivers & patient) currently embarking on the journey of lung transplant.

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