

# My Transplant Story

By Brenda Merrilees, Hamilton, Scotland

Now I'm well into my recovery I thought I would share my story with you.

It all started in January 2007 when a biopsy confirmed that I had kidney failure caused by an immune system disease called IgA Nephropathy. Its not known what causes this disease and there's no cure, but the doctors think I've had it from when I was a teenager, maybe caused by a virus. I think it was from when I was 16 and was really ill with glandular fever. Anyway around 75% of people get it to a certain stage and it stays like that and there's no need for any treatment, but in the other 25% it progresses, eventually causing the kidneys to fail completely and then you need dialysis. Surprise surprise unlucky me was in the 25%! So over the next few years I attended the clinic at the renal unit in Monklands hospital in Airdrie gradually seeing my kidneys getting worse and worse until on the 20th July 2011 I started dialysis, going to hospital 3 times per week on the machine for 4 hours each time to clean my blood and keep me alive. I really struggled both mentally and physically for the first 6 months, but after that it became my life. It was never a pleasant experience, but I managed by saying every Monday, Wednesday and Friday that I was going to my work. I would leave my house at 6.30am and eventually get home, totally shattered around 1.30pm, when I'd sleep most of the afternoon. Having kidney failure totally drained me, I had no energy to do much at all but plodded on just the same.

Then at 12.07am on the 9th May this year I got "the call" to say a kidney had become available for me! I was in a state of shock, nothing could prepare me for that phone call but yes it was happening, I had to go to the Western Infirmary in Glasgow at 7.00am. After a very long night, my sister Veronica and brother in law John took me in and after a very long day full of false starts (there were 3 transplants getting done that day) I was taken down to theatre at 5.50pm and after a 3 hour operation was awake and back in the ward around 10.00pm, feeling sore and tired but ok considering what I'd just gone through (I think the morphine helped!) it turned out that the Western was closing the next day, so I had made history by being the last ever transplant there! I was transferred the next day to the new South Glasgow University Hospital where I spent the next 6 days with the best of care anyone could ask for. I came on leaps and bounds, even the doctors were surprised how well I was doing and was up and about the next day and just kept getting better and better. I got home on the Friday and have got better every day. I attend the clinic at Stobhill and I'll be on anti-rejection medication for life but that's a small price to pay. I already have lots more energy and I'm looking forward to the next stage of my life.

I only know that the donor was the same age as me and had a donor card and in their death have saved me and I will be forever grateful. So anyone reading this, please sign up for organ donation, I'm living proof it saves lives.