



Uncle Kip would never  
have known he saved  
my life. Tragically, he  
passed away 18 days  
before I was diagnosed.

On the 14th February 2004, my Uncle Kip flew from Baltimore to Christchurch, New Zealand on business. It proved to be an arduous journey.

Within four hours of landing a massive heart attack ended his life.

It was so acute his travelling companions believe he was already dead before hitting the ground.

No one expected it, least of all Kip. He was only 52.

My mum (Kip's sister) was distraught and sought comfort from our family doctor. Besides consoling her, he recommended a precautionary blood test. In her wisdom she dragged the entire family along.

At the time I couldn't see the point – I felt well, looked fit and attributed my occasional tiredness to the pressures of a stressful job in banking.

It was inconceivable that I might have the same problem as my uncle; nevertheless, within 48 hours, my tests (several by that stage) had thrown up a life-threatening abnormality. A thorough consultation in Dorchester hospital was required. And quickly!

After more blood and urine tests; and ultra-sound scans and a biopsy, the renal specialists were equipped to deliver their jaw-dropping verdict: I had kidney failure.

It was the 4th March; two months before my 19th birthday and eighteen days since my uncle's death.

Over the next two years the specialists monitored me closely – initially every three months and then once a month. The hospital prepared me for dialysis, performed a fistula (attaching an artery to a vein in my wrist), gave me an intravenous iron infusion and watched my immune system collapse. It was a nail-biting time for everyone; in particular my parents who dug deep and never gave up on a miracle.

At 11:30pm on the 16th January 2006 their prayers were answered – Southmead Hospital in Bristol phoned to say they thought they were in receipt of a suitable transplantable organ and I needed to be with them immediately. After a day of thorough blood, tissue and crossmatch testing I was finally wheeled into theatre at 7:45pm. Within five hours I was the grateful recipient of a new kidney.

And this is where you might think my story ends, but as with all organ transplants there is no such thing.

It just keeps on running and running.

In the October, my body decided it was a propitious time to begin rejecting the new organ, so back to Southmead hospital I rushed. And after more biopsies, a massive dose of steroids and a course of hormone treatment, I was some of the way to being back on track. Admittedly, my immune system was at an all-time low but, hey, things were functioning properly once again.

Since this gargantuan hiccup my condition has improved immensely. However, I'm no longer able to swim in a communal pool – something I thoroughly enjoyed prior to the operation – for fear of infection and friends no longer have to worry about a designated driver after a night out. I'll have to pop 13 pills for the rest of my life and will be the first to be prescribed antibiotics for simple things such as a common cold.

But let me put these drawbacks into context – I'm very lucky to be alive. And it's all thanks to my uncle, the premature death of a healthy person, who took the trouble to register as an organ donor, combined with the unequivocal care and attention provided by the NHS nurses, doctors, surgeons and renal specialists.

Sadly though, it's impossible for the NHS to pay for everything, especially when as many as 6,790 patients in the UK were waiting for a transplant in January 2009 – over one hundred of who live in Dorset.

This is where the Dorset Kidney Fund comes into play; and, of course, you the public.

The Fund's role is to provide support to the renal services throughout Dorset, by way of equipment purchases and help to patients. Help in the shape of new hoists for the dialysis unit in Dorchester hospital, costing £3,000; replacement HD televisions for Bournemouth and Dorchester dialysis units, amounting to over £8,000 and £40,000 for the initial costs of a patient psychologist.

The list of requirements is endless; sadly the funding isn't.

Needless to say, YOUR donation can make a massive difference, so too can long-term covenants. Please don't mull over the matter, just donate. And do it – NOW! Send your donations to the Hon. Treasurer of the Dorset Kidney Fund at 19 Eleanor Drive, Bearwood Park, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH11 9PB or write to him about providing a covenant.

Thank you.

