

Patrice Broussard
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Liver Recipient

My knowledge of organ transplantation came courtesy of Grey's Anatomy and the ill-fated love story of Denny Duquette and Izzie Stevens. That scenario seemed so irrelevant to me. Never did I imagine that I too would be someone in need of an organ transplant.

Last year, I was a seemingly healthy 32-year-old wife and mother of three. Little did I know that my body was killing me from the inside out. My killer was Wilson's disease, a rare genetic disorder that prevents the body from getting rid of extra copper. I started showing symptoms of Wilson's disease around Thanksgiving 2008. By late January 2009, I was in a hospital bed with a team of doctors trying to figure out what was wrong with my liver. Six days later, I was moved to DC San Francisco Medical Center with a diagnosis of acute liver failure due to Wilson's disease. The next day, I was on an operating table receiving my new liver and a second chance at life.

Because of the severity of my condition, I was put on status 1 on a transplant list. Hours later a match was found. Everyone told me that it was a miracle that I received my new liver so quickly. I am truly grateful for my second chance at life, but am saddened that on February 8, 2009 (the date of my surgery), at least 18 people died waiting for their miracle. It also meant that someone had to die to give me life.

It's said that God works in mysterious ways and I am a firm believer of that. I am a living, breathing testimonial of how organ donation works. I believe that part of my calling in life is to raise awareness for the growing need for organ donation.

One month post-op, I was signing up online to be an ambassador with Donate Life California. Two months after surgery I was lobbying Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and members of the California legislature, urging the members to support the organ donation legislation before them. Five months post-op, I was telling Donnie Wahlberg (an actor and member of New Kids on the Block) my story, showing him my transplant scar and placing a green "Donate Life" bracelet on his wrist. Later that night, he wore the bracelet during the concert. Almost 11 months post-op, I'm hoping that I will have the honor of riding on the Donate Life float in the 2010 Rose Parade in Pasadena.