

Kidney transplant program sets a world record for most 'paired donations' in a year

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When Rich Green learned that he needed a new kidney last fall, several of his friends and family members stepped forward as potential donors. But none were an exact match.

Patients who need transplanted organs must receive them from someone whose [blood type](#) and tissues are compatible with their own, so their

body doesn't attack their new organ after surgery. Green's most promising option was his brother-in-law, Jason Kingsborough, who was only a partial match.

Still, Kingsborough was determined to donate a kidney—even if it wasn't going to his 52-year-old brother-in-law from Media.

That's how the two became part of a "paired [kidney donation](#)" at Penn Medicine. The transplant method connects potential donors and recipients who've had trouble finding matches among relatives and friends. Green was linked with a [kidney donor](#) in Los Angeles who was a better match than his relative. That donor, in turn, had a loved one in need of a kidney who was compatible with Kingsborough.

Theirs was the 100th paired kidney donation that doctors at Penn oversaw in the past year—a [world record](#), Penn Medicine officials say. (The hospital did not say whether they planned to submit the achievement to Guinness World Records.) Officials at the National Kidney Registry confirmed that it was a record accomplishment, which they called an example for other transplant centers to follow.

Three years ago, Penn partnered with the National Kidney Registry to facilitate more paired donations, and the hospital's Kidney Living Donor Program has since hired additional staff to help recipients and donors navigate the logistics of a transplant operation.

That extra capacity helped Penn doctors reach the 100 paired-donation milestone this year, said Amanda Leonberg-Yoo, medical director of the living donor program.

"Philadelphia has a really high prevalence of kidney disease," she said. "I hope this gives people hope that there's the possibility of receiving a kidney."

Patients and donors alike have inspired Leonberg-Yoo as the hospital has increased its paired donations. One of her patients received a kidney as part of a chain of donations started by a man who gave a kidney with no particular recipient in mind.

"There's goodness in the world. It was a big ask, to give a kidney to someone he didn't know," she said.

Green needed a transplant five years after being diagnosed with primary focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, a chronic disease that causes scarring in the kidney, preventing it from functioning properly. He could control the disease with medication initially, but his [kidney function](#) deteriorated. A year ago in October, he had to start dialysis.

"Once we found out that I needed a kidney, we mobilized as much as we could," he said.

Green and his family launched a website with the National Kidney Registry and started sharing information about donating.

Living kidney donation is relatively safe for donors. Still, Green and Kingsborough had several long conversations, discussing the risks of the surgery and the recovery.

Kingsborough felt certain in his decision to donate. "He would feel terrible if something happened to me," Green said. "It's amazing that he decided to do that for me. If you can do this type of thing to help someone, you really should consider it."

Green received his kidney in early December and has been recovering at home. His new kidney is beginning to function fully, and Green is looking forward to being off dialysis entirely.

"It's really cool, the fact that they've completed this procedure that many times; that they've helped that many people. It's quite the honor to be No. 100," he said.

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