

Season 2 Episode 5 – The Gift of Life and Its Impact
Guest: Maria E. Ferris, MD, MPH, PhD, Ted Ferris & Chris Ivimey

Len Usvyat

Welcome to the Renal Research Institute, Frontiers in Kidney Medicine and Biology, where we share knowledge and advances in kidney research with the world. In the United States, more than 90,000 people are currently waiting for kidney donation. Yet only 25,000 donor kidney transplant happen in this country each year. Unfortunately, about 12 people die on a daily basis waiting for a kidney donor.

Living donation truly makes a huge difference. It cuts wait times, improves patient outcomes, and can double the life expectancy of a transplanted kidney. Compared to a deceased donor. Today I'm joined by Doctor Maria Ferris, a pediatric nephrologist and an epidemiologist and a professor of pediatrics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who, in addition to researching young adults with kidney disease and their healthcare transition, was a kidney donor herself to

Her then young son. We are also very fortunate to be joined by her son, Ted Ferris, who works as a national director of clinical research for mental and behavioral health clinics and is a three time kidney transplant recipient. And we're also joined by Chris Ivimey, a field application specialist at Cetiva where he focuses on bioreactors and growing cells at a large scale to make them efficiently produce lifesaving medicine.

Chris is also an altruistic kidney donor. Together, we will discuss organ donation and the importance of living donor transplantation and the impact that it makes on their families and the generations beyond. Well, Maria, Ted and Chris, of course. Thank you all so very much for joining me here today. And I think you all have such unique personal stories from so many different angles.

Obviously, Maria, you as a nephrologist, as a kidney donor, Chris, you as a not nephrologist, that's a very altruistic kidney donor. And then, of course, Ted, you as a kidney recipient and a son of, and a son of a nephrologist, I'd love to. Maybe Mario kind of start off with you, and I want to make sure this is, of course, very casual as a conversation.

But, you know, how did your medical background did it influence, your decisions, your pathway with Ted, of course, in terms of, your kidney donations and how you got into pediatric nephrology, I'd love to kind of hear your personal story about it.

Maria Ferris

Well, very quickly, I was the, finishing medical school when Teddy was diagnosed, and I already enjoyed astrology. And in order for me to deal with the new diagnosis and the

uncertainties, I just decided to learn more in the field. And I decided to do this fellowship in pediatric nephrology. That's the story. I've always liked it.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, yeah. And I think, Chris, let me ask you, a bit of a follow up question here, because, again, I think you are the one that probably doesn't. Well, you do have a medical background, but maybe not as a physician, per se. What's your, how much do you know about kidneys growing up? I think everybody has a different perspective.

I'd love to hear yours, because I certainly know mine. Tell me more.

Chris Ivimey

Yeah. There was nothing really, too significant. Like I enjoyed biology. I majored in biochemistry, so I had kind of a background in anatomy and that kind of stuff, but kidneys were really a huge focus. When I was growing up, I didn't know anyone who had Kane disease or, too much associated with it. My mother is diabetic, so that's always like a risk with that condition, but or like a future risk with that condition.

But there was nothing to major. It really wasn't until I kind of was inspired to get into this process that I really learned more. And now I wouldn't say that I'm anywhere nearly as qualified as Maria, but I just I'm kind of on my friend group, the one that is who is knowledgeable about kidneys these days, though.

Yeah.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, I'm sure, I'm sure, I'm sure you are. And I will have some questions for you about that. So perfect. Yeah. And then I think, Ted, obviously I think, you know, it sounds like there were, I think even when you were born. And of course, I understand your first, kidney transplant was that, you were 16.

So tell me more about kind of what you knew about kidneys, about kidney disease growing up. I mean, I think it must have been such a different perspective, being so young and being so aware of kidney disease. And what is kidney disease?

Ted Ferris

Yeah, absolutely. First, I just like to say thank you to Chris for being an altruistic donor. I mean, I think obviously, as your intro explained, we need more of those. Right. But, so, so thank you, Chris, for doing what you did. I was born with kidney disease. So for me, there is no, no life without it, right?

It just is. It's my normal. And so, you know, both of my parents did a great job of raising me despite the many challenges of the disease. To be just like everybody else and view

life as, as, as this is my normal and so kidney disease and being in the end stage renal dialysis, transplant, all of that was just kind of baked in.

You know, I, I remember when I was maybe 8 or 9 years old, I had a surgery procedure in the morning. And then I went to go play baseball that afternoon. Right. So it was just life. It is what it was. And so I probably have a much different perspective in dealing with the disease. And maybe someone who's diagnosed later in life or as an adult, that's, I think, a much bigger, you know, hurdle to jump because you've, you've understood what life could be like as a healthy adult.

And then now all of a sudden, you're dealing with the challenges of the chronic disease that, that this presents.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, Ted, when you were younger, when you're looking at pictures and books of anatomy of the kidney, you know, the nephrons and all the, the tube of hennelly and all that other stuff, or was that not of a lot of interest to you as a, as a kid, I guess?

Ted Ferris

Well, you know, to me, I don't know if this is a coping mechanism or not, but because it just was I was always focused on what normal is and sports and playing sports and being good in school and all the normal kid stuff. So, you know, despite growing up in a, in a home with a world renowned nephrologist, I never focused on the kidneys.

I never talked about the kidneys at home. It was not even, like I said, with my example of the surgery in the morning and baseball in the afternoon, I just went in for something, but I was really just focused on getting the baseball game.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. No, I completely understand. Ted, I'm going to ask you one more question.

Maria Ferris

Say something about that. Thank you for reminding me, Ted. But, But he's not telling you, is he went home with a urinary bag, a bladder, catheter and everything, and he was sliding into home with that bag. So it was not just going to the surgery and then going to play. He went to play with a Foley catheter in place in the urinary tract, collecting his urine.

So it was it's an extraordinary, time.

Len Usvyat

It really is. I mean, I think I have to ask you, you know, and I know we spoke yesterday a little bit, Ted, but, you know, for people who don't have this, I think it's such an

incredible thing to listen to and to actually, I certainly try to relate to, what you're telling me. One maybe quick question for you.

And I think since Ted, I was, I asked you a question. Tell me more about obviously, one of the things that a lot of people ask is, you know, after the surgery and that you actually received the, you received your I think your second transplant was the one that was actually successful. Can you tell me a little bit more about, you know, how you felt?

And I mean, I know there's a recovery time and I think we all know there's a lot of medications, immunosuppressants and other things that, you have to take in the very beginning. Can you tell me a little bit more about that and how your experience was? And to our audience is certainly would be?

Ted Ferris

Oh, absolutely. I would equate it to, the wizard at the beginning of The Wizard of Oz, where it's in black and white, and then Dorothy wakes up after the tornado and everything's in bright Technicolor. I mean, it was just like a switch was flipped. And the fatigue, the anemia, the hypertension, the just malaise of the disease was lifted and gone.

And sure, I had all these medications, I was immunosuppressed, I had to be careful about what I did and where I went and wear a mask. But to me, all that was like a drop in the bucket compared to I felt normal again, as opposed to feeling the disease and the weight of it every single day, all day long.

And so that it was just like a light switch turning on.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, yeah. No, I can only imagine. And I know I'm going to, you know, I can assure you, I'll ask you a couple of questions about dialysis as well, because I think, as, as we all know, I think the kidney transplant truly is the gift of life. But I think you actually used the analogy of kind of some of this, especially home dialysis.

It was very nice to hear from you yesterday about that. You also thought it was a gift of life. And so, and so I'll ask you more questions about it, but I do want to turn it back to a little bit. Chris, I mean, obviously, as you know, when I first learned your story, I was fascinated because, as you know, I've been I've been in this field for 25 years.

I also, to me, it was just so fascinating to hear this and such a wonderful thing. As, you know, it does not happen that often, sadly, in this country. But it's a wonderful thing. To hear, I'm going to ask you just a couple of questions about how you well, first, I'm going to ask you obviously, what led to it.

I mean, it sounds like you did a lot of research. And, you know, I think you had a friend. I don't know who the friend was, but I think, you know, it was you or I think it was your friend's dad that I think that was what, your specific donation or so. Tell me more about initially, kind of what led to your decision.

Chris Ivimey

Yeah, certainly. So, I had a good friend from high school, and she and I were just, as you know, have kept in touch ever since then. And we were talking one day and she told me about how her dad's kidney was starting to fail, and he had to go on a special diet for it. They were monitor him closely.

He was constantly going in, not the hospital, just for tests and for monitoring and such. And she told me that she was interested in potentially becoming a donor for him, or at least like in the future when his kidney did fully fail becoming a donor and so least trying to help him get a kidney sooner if she wasn't a perfect match.

So this has been my friend for a number of years, and when I heard about this, I kind of thought that it's always better to go through something like this with someone else. So I was I pretty much told her, hey, I'd be interested in going in this with you, trying to become a donor as well, and just going through all the testing to see if I could be a match for your father or if, like, at least be there with you when you were going through this whole process.

So we started together. We, would just text back and forth about the jokes about the different tests that we were going through, like, this isn't you were like, peeing in a cup. And like, all the different kind of tests you had to go through to kind of, like, get approval and stuff going into the hospital, all these different trips in there, and then over time, her test results, led the doctors to conclude that she would be high risk if she decided to follow through with the donation.

And so she was advised to not continue. But for me, at least, I was able to get through the tests without any issues. Or was, at least the doctors were not concerned by my test results. And with my, just medical history, they said that I would be a good contender for donation in general. After that, I proceed to go through with the testing.

So I'd say I think it started in April of 2021. This whole process and about eight months of testing later, I finally obtained approval. And then in February of the following year, I was able to carry out my donation so that. Yeah, that's my story.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. Thanks, Chris. I, so just maybe a couple of really quick follow up questions. The first one is I realize, you know, you have your surgery, you open your eyes. Like, what do you remember feeling? You know, within those first, you know, few minutes, few

hours, maybe a couple of days. I mean, I since I know you a little bit personally, I remember that.

I think, you know, there were some I remember you saying something about that you felt like those, you know, you felt okay, but you felt like there was something maybe missing, like physically actually missing in your body. So I I'd love to hear this kind of this experience right after. Yeah.

Chris Ivimey

Absolutely. So, so right after I remember my first thought I woke up was actually thinking, well, that was easy. So, like, I just remember, like, waking up and being like, oh, that, like, this is a thing I've been thinking about for like a solid amount of time and like the fact that, like, you go into the operating room, you go to sleep and then you wake up and it's done.

It's kind of like, oh, wow, that was that was really wasn't so bad at all. I mean, obviously the anesthesia was still having an impact like that. It was so I didn't quite feel everything in those first few minutes or hours. But I remember like thinking, oh, that was really chill. I called my parents immediately just because I knew the family, like, knew this was going on and they were like a bit, like not worried, but this want to make sure that everything had gone smoothly.

So it was great to talk to them afterwards. The first night afterwards, that was when I think it got a bit more achy, like, I don't think it was really the like incisions that were the real problem instead. And Maria, you'll probably know about this much more than I do, but as I understand, they kind of have to, like, inflate, your inner cavity with, CO2 in order to do the surgery and get more room and having, like, all that, like, kind of bubbles and air in there, that was really kind of uncomfortable.

But then besides that, it things started to heal up. I was able to move more easily. It was certainly, a like moving and using your core was, definitely a struggle in the days afterwards. But I'd say overall, like the the cover recovery was really, really, really straightforward. The one thing I will say that I did not expect was, just how much you use your core when you laugh, like, I come from a very a family of, very funny people.

And, like, there's a lot of laughter in my household. And so when I was going into my parents place, like for a week of recovery, I didn't realize just how much you laugh at how painful that is after the surgery. So that was one thing I didn't expect. But I mean, overall, I think that the recovery went really, really well for me.

It was definitely some time off the gym, which the gym isn't like. I go to the gym a lot, but it definitely was kind of, I was like waiting to get fully back to 100% and like, ready to get back to the gym. But I do think that was like a few months really just flew by, you know?

Yeah.

Len Usvyat

When you left, who knew laughing would be so hard?

Chris Ivimey

No. Exactly. And like, it's also one of those things where like, when you're just stuck in bed for covering like so much and by entertainment at least, is comedy based. But like, I couldn't watch any of that because, like, I couldn't laugh or else I'd be like, it was really, really painful. So I had to, like, find other things.

There were a lot of documentaries. I watched a lot of the documentaries during the recovery. That was my kind of main focus. Lots of reading and documentaries. Yeah.

Len Usvyat

Oh, that's really, that's really incredible. Well, and I guess, you know, since we're on the topic of how you feel or felt at the time, I recall, I think you said it was maybe a few weeks of kind of recovery when you at that point you felt completely fine. Just. And I mean, I assume now you feel 200% fine, but, you know, just kind of like, when did you when do you think you felt completely normal and back to your real self.

Chris Ivimey

Back to my full self? It's actually incredible. So the doctors told me like, no, go into the gym for three months. And it really was like, like almost day of at that three month mark was when, like I was like, oh, I can, I can turn without any kind of pain or tightness. I can open doors. Opening doors is amazing.

That that was like one of the hardest things for me. Like, I know when I open them, I can't really pull into it, but like that always kind of like had like a twang whenever I did that. But yeah, that three month mark was really when, oh, I'm, I'm kind of back and like here and there you get kind of like some tightness and such and so on, so forth.

But really that three month mark was like I think my before and after, like personally for me. Yeah.

Len Usvyat

Oh, well, again, I mean it's an incredible story. And you know, maybe Maria, I do have I do have a little bit of a follow up question and I think I know we've chatted about this a little bit before, but I understand that, of course. Ted received, the first, kidney transplant was from you, when you were, when he was about 16 years old.

And I also understand that it was unsuccessful due to a surgical error. And maybe, you know, I'd love to get your perspective personally, but also, you know, I mean, we all know grafts don't always survive. And I think there is some probability that, hopefully not as often due to a technical error, which I think is what happened in your case.

But can you just talk about it a little bit more medically, how often things like this may happen and, you know, and then and you.

Maria Ferris

It's incredibly rare.

Len Usvyat

This.

Maria Ferris

This complication, this thing is rare. So I want to encourage potential living donors to not think that that's going to happen. It's incredible, incredibly rare. And we had other avenues and options like dialysis. So it's not like it affected my son's life immediately in that way. It's very frustrating, very sad. And I was the medical partner in the relationship with, Ted's father.

So he's not going to be able to advocate. Hey, let's do this. Let's do that. So that was a frustrating and sad part is that if I had not been the donor, it had been in somebody else, I would have been able to maybe, perhaps make some changes. But we can't dwell on that. The other thing I wanted to talk about, you talk about when did you know you were back and recovered for me was six weeks.

And I didn't have the experience you had. I had a different approach. They did not do the technique that you had, Chris. They get there, went on the side and got the kidney out directly so they didn't have to put that in, in my, the air in my abdomen. For me, I knew I was back is when I was driving.

I love to drive and I drove. I was told not to drive for the first 4 to 6 weeks. Well, why about week five, I got in my car. I was, you know, I knew I was back. The other thing that that potential donor need to think about, particularly women in childbearing age, is can you have another child or another pregnancy?

And I'm going to tell you that I had two children after my donation. It's possible to be a parent after donation. So, I'm completely healthy. It's been a number of decades that that happened. You know, I watch my salt, watch my diet, I take no medications, and I'm a healthy donor at this age. So, just be a good citizen to your body, and you'll recover well long term.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. Maria, that's a obviously a wonderful story. I know you, you know, you brought up a couple of things. I think the first one is talking about children. Ted, I know you have two beautiful daughters. I do want to see their pictures at some point. But I know you have a five and a six year old daughter, and, I think, Ted, maybe I'll ask you a question.

Since some, Maria's brought up dialysis a little bit, and I know you. You actually talked about it a little bit with me yesterday. So can you talk about this a little bit? You know, there's incentive dialysis, home dialysis. I think you brought it up yesterday, so I thought maybe I'll ask you some questions about it because obviously it is, you know, to me, the ultimate gift of life, of course, is a transplant.

But you did say something interesting to me about dialysis, which was, which was nice to hear as well.

Ted Ferris

Yeah, absolutely. So as a teenager, I just had hemodialysis in center and, the interesting thing about that part was I was a very shy child, and that period of that year of being on dialysis in the center, I made so many friends, the nurses fellow patients. And so I try to take good away from everything.

Right? So despite the process and time consuming process and of course, being a high schooler, I was like three days a week. I get out of school two hours early. Instead of how difficult dialysis is and how, really exhausting you feel, after hemodialysis. And so later in life, after my, my second transplant in between second and third, I briefly was on hemodialysis and summer and then transitioned home and that in and of itself was also like a stasis an ice moment because and center dialysis, hemodialysis, it is an exhausting process here.

It's a day and a half of recovery. You get maybe 6 to 10 hours of, oh, I feel pretty good. And then the, you know, disease takes over and you got to go back in. Right. And so, hemodialysis was is an exhausting experience. And especially as an adult, limits your ability to have a, a fully-fledged career and all those things.

And so when I transitioned to home dialysis, it was almost like a whole new world all over again because, home dialysis allowed me to live a full life, you know, dialysis at night. I had more energy because I was dialysis. And every night, I mean, there was a time when I was on dialysis where, we took a trip to Disney World.

I was fortunate to do that. And three straight days walking five, six, seven miles a day. And no big deal because I was dilating every night. Right. And so how dialysis ended up itself was also a gift, that I experienced transitioning off of hemodialysis. And then again,

for me, I was on PD at home for almost a year, and when my cousin donated her kidney and I woke up from that surgery and it was like, oh, right, this is what a colorful world looks like again.

Because I had adjusted to the home dialysis normal. And just to reiterate what my mom said, you know, my two children, who were, you know, just the light of my life, I've got two girls. I'm a proud girl that neither one of them would be born without. My cousin Lulu having donated her kidney to me.

And she herself is now pregnant with her first child. And so it's just an amazing, life affirming gift that, doesn't limit you from living a normal, healthy life after giving that gift. So, you know, Chris, you've shared your story and just wanted to share that as well.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, yeah. You know, Ted, obviously it's, you know, you said so many things that I wanted to mention. You know, you said something very interesting that I certainly think about. And I think many of us as we age, it's, you know, you wake up one day and you're like, if you could only feel how you used to feel 20 or 30 years ago, you know.

And that's right. That's what you made me think of when you when you mentioned, oh, I remember how I felt, you know, when you got, you know, when you woke up with your, with an actual graft or an actual kidney transplant that's, that, you know, while you may be living on dialysis, I think certainly the, the feeling that you may get with a kidney transplant is actually quite different.

So that's and it's pretty incredible to hear, I think, Chris, I want to ask you a question, and I think maybe it's for both you and also a little bit for Maria. I do think it is so important that I think the living donation is obviously, so critical. And, and there's a lot of rumors and a lot of things relating to, you know, how does that affect people's lives?

And, you know, all the stuff that I think may exist out there and fears and things like this. And of course, when you actually look at the facts and the data, is that most of the, you know, I think it's just not true. I think people can live with one kidney. So I think, Chris, I'm assuming you did some research, back in the day, I'm sure maybe that was a question for you.

So maybe I'll ask you a question first about kind of what? You know, what you were researching and kind of what you learned when you were looking at the at the literature and the various websites that I think exist out there in the Maria. And then I'm going to ask you a more formally about a medical perspective on this, because I do think it's important for audiences to know, because I do think there's initially the gut reaction of most people.

If you say, oh, I'm going to give up one of my kidneys, there's this sense of fear, like, what do you mean? You have two? So you should have two. But I think, you know, I think we all know that actually, physiologically, it's not that it's two for a reason. It's two because of how, you know, cells split in the, you know, and, during the growth process.

So maybe Chris, I'll ask you first that question. So.

Chris Ivimey

Yeah. So, I, I did some research when I was first considering, like, well, when I was first seriously considering, donating the kidney, I did some research, looked at a number of papers just on, like, kind of lifespans and just quality of life. For me, as, like, a younger man when I donated, like, there are things like contact sports and, for me personally, rock climbing, which is a bit of a concern when you, doing a kidney just because the way the harness or some harnesses are positioned, if you have a bad fall, it can, lead to damage in the area.

I since research on, like what preventative measures you can do, I did research on like how likely injuries to the kidney are and those sports and just from my from what I found, everyone who donate the people that donated there was not a major difference in lifespans. People who climbed. I found forums of climbers with one kidney and there are cars you can wear.

And there were. But for the most part, no one ever claimed that it was really an issue for them. The biggest other thing for me was that I run a lot. I'm a pretty active person, and the staying hydrated and like concerns about things like rabideau if I were to ever go for a very intense hike, were there.

But I mean, in a lot of ways it almost may be just more conscious about staying hydrated and like preparing more for when I do those big events. Really, then then like deterring me from doing them? I think honestly, the donation just made me much better at planning things out. When I do go for something that would be just more risky in terms of like, like keeping my kidney healthy, it made me better about staying hydrated, better.

But planning. And I think ultimately it made me take care of my body a lot more, which I think was a sum total, a benefit. So yeah, that was my experience. It's not limiting me or anything. It's really just made me better at taking care of my body in general. Yeah.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, that's a wonderful perspective. I mean, I think yeah, I think it's I never thought of it that way. But I think now that you say this, I think it makes a lot of sense. And Marie, I guess, you know, as a physician in the room, I'll ask you a question. I think, you know, I

mean, obviously medically, we all know that there isn't, you know, it's not really affecting people, but maybe I'll just ask your perspective on this.

If a living donor wants to give their kidney what, you know, just like you did, or just like Chris did, I think, what is your perspective on this in terms of their life going forward?

Maria Ferris

Well, first of all, I want to acknowledge Chris's donation, which is really an amazing gift. A number of us have given it to our family members, but you did not. But I want you to know the impact in that patient's family and friends. It's unmeasurable. So, thank you for your wonderful gift. Thank you.

From the medical standpoint, you know, when you prepare potential donors, in my case, we prepare parents or grandparents who want to donate are aunts and uncles. We approach them. The education from all the standpoints. Can I work? Can I have children? Can I have a social life after donation? What's going to happen to me after donation? How long will I live?

Well, I affect my longevity and those questions are answered easily with data. So people have almost normal lifespans, and those who pass the expected lifespan do very well precisely because they're donors like kidney and other donors that become good citizens to their bodies. Now, they don't go in and do risky behaviors, or they don't go and take medicines without justification because they're taking care of their one kidney.

So that's one thing I wanted to mention. The other thing I wanted to mention is there are human beings that never know that they have one kidney, the die having one kidney, and it's found in autopsy, or it's found, incidentally, they go in for a procedure and they do a study. And oh you have one kidney and you've never known it.

Right? The kidneys are those wonderful organs in the body. I think they're the best targets in the body. I'm sorry to be nephron centric, but the heart is just a pump, right? And the brain doesn't do very much with that. They give is working well. But the reality is, you know, you can have a decent life until about, you about 20% kidney function and you need a kidney or dialysis and about 10% of kidney function.

So that's how noble the kidneys are. And kidney patients, while they have a condition that is chronic, that there's no cure for it, I want everybody to think about how wonderful it is to have dialysis or to have a donor because, you know, kidney donations have been about 50, or 75 years old. The dialysis that's been a lot longer.

And it's been prolonging, prolonging people's lives. Unlike liver disease, for example, or heart disease, you don't have the extra help that dialysis gives you. So, I think that there

is hope. I think that in commemorating World Kidney Day, it's important for us to think about our family members. Or if you have a friend that has kidney disease, suggest to the whole family to check their blood pressure, suggest to everybody to be checking their blood pressure and their kidney function.

Hey docs, how are my kidneys when you go to see the doctor as a doctor? Hey, how is my kidney function? And that's how you can start propagating this message. The world Kidney Death Day has for us is let's take care of those kidneys. They're wonderful.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, well, I agree 100%. And I do want, remind everybody that March 13th is World Kidney Day, which is actually one of the reasons, we're trying to do this episode because we really want to remind everybody about living, donations, which are obviously so, so important. Maria, you brought up something else that I think is important for the audience to know.

I realize, of course, most clinicians know this, but in general, the public does not necessarily know this. So, when Chris, which again, thank you, Chris, for what you have done, the way it worked with you is you set off a chain of kidney transplants. And then what essentially happens in many of these situations. So, you, your friend's father, you were not necessarily a match, but what actually happens is you set off a kidney chain.

That means that other people in the chain get it based on their matches, are actually able to get a transplant. So it's really the most incredible and remarkable thing that happens with these truly altruistic, not a family member, like donation. So again, Chris, thank you. I, Ted, maybe I'll I'll ask you a question. I know we have maybe a couple more minutes.

And I think, you know, one of the questions that you want to ask is, of course, I know this is now while it's your third, I guess, kidney. And, you know, how do you think about the future? You know, and I know you are. I believe you're in your 40s. And, you know, tell me a little bit more about what you think.

And, you know, how do you kind of prepare for. I know we had a short conversation about this yesterday, but I'd love to hear from you now about this.

Ted Ferris

Yeah. No, absolutely. I mean, I think, I accept the fact that that this kidney that I have, thanks to my cousin, you know, we're just ten years old. We celebrate it together. We went on a cruise together to celebrate ten years. And it's not going to last forever. So I'm fully cognizant and hope I live to, you know, 75, 80, 85, etc.

Right. And so I can do mass. So at some point I'm going to need another kidney. And so it's just a fact of life. And I'm encouraged that technology is improving. I mean, transplant medications are improving. Dialysis technology is improving. There's innovations in the world of transplant and so all these things that seem sci fi, you know, when I had my very first transplant back in 1996, those things are happening.

And so I just accept that at some point I'm probably gonna have to go on peritoneal dialysis again, because that's going to be my choice. I want to die at home. It's only one step below a transplant. I can still live a normal life with the SRT, with home dialysis, so I just take that into it's not an if, but a one and live life to the fullest every day that I can, but the gift of the kidney that I have and when the day comes, the day comes.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. That's really, I mean, it's really incredible. And, you know, Chris, I know you, a few days ago, you asked me about, a social media post because it was a three-year anniversary of your donation. I'm just going to ask you a quick question. Did you get any responses? What do your friends think about this?

I mean, I think I know we have a couple of friends in common. What do people usually tell you? I don't, you know, I don't know. I'd love to kind of know. What do people say?

Chris Ivimey

It's just it's generally they think it's incredible when you tell them that the fact that you donate, they say that that's awesome. And they say that that's something that, very, very nice that you do. And I mean, I appreciate it, but I would also love for them to say it like that. I hope that my story can encourage more people to do it personally.

That's really like what I intended with that Instagram, with that Instagram post that I made about it. I really hope that, like, people can see that, I'm able to live, that I'm able to live my life to the fullest, that donating has not stopped me or limited my life in any way, and I hope that it does encourage other people to consider a donation if they're eligible, or to at least get themselves tested, and consider it strongly that they could do the same and not worry that they would have that it would limit their life in any way.

Len Usvyat

Yeah, yeah. Well, Chris, I can assure you, I mean, obviously me being in this field for so long, I've thought about this subject actually quite a lot myself. Personally, I can also tell you that yesterday, as I was preparing for this over the last couple of days, I did have some conversations at home as I was like, maybe it's time, you know?

So. So I do think I can assure you that I think you may make a difference and whether me or other people watching this, I do think it's an incredible thing to do. And I think it's extraordinarily important. So, I, you know, I think on that, I know we're almost at time or

at time. I mean, any concluding thoughts from Tad, Maria, Chris, anything before we, before we conclude for the day?

And obviously, I want to thank you all, from different angles and perspectives. I want to thank you for your time, but any kind of finishing thoughts?

Ted Ferris

Shame.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. Of course.

Ted Ferris

Yeah, sure. So, I've kind of hinted at this whole interview, but the only reason I have children is because of a kidney donor. The only reason I have a career and a successful career is because of my family, kidney donors and so it's not just the person you're donating to that you're saving, but you're saving countless other lives and future generations for that person by one gift.

And so thank you, Chris, for giving that gift to, you know, your, your friends and, I sincerely hope that others watch this and learn that it's not this scary thing that that, you know, there can be you can live, a normal life after donating a kidney. And as a person who's on dialysis, there's hope. There's revolutions coming for you to help you get your kidney or, better dialysis treatments and living a normal life.

All these things are happening. And it's the future. Yeah.

Len Usvyat

Oh, Ted. Thank you. Maria, anything you'd like to say?

Maria Ferris

Well, as a health provider, I have had the honor of serving patients with kidney disease. Pediatric adolescents and young adults. And it is an honor to serve those patients. To me, they are my heroes. They don't need a cape. They are amazing individuals who are resilient, who go to the dialysis unit every time continuing to live life to their fullest.

And it is an I want to say thank you for organizing this event in, honor of World Kidney Day. Because for me, kidney patients rock.

Len Usvyat

Maria. Thank you. I mean, obviously, as you know, I, I know you for many, many years, and I've been very fortunate. I can tell everybody in the audience that there Maria is

truly one of the most passionate and wonderful physicians, pediatric physicians that I know. So, I thank you. And then, Chris, anything you want to share.

Chris Ivimey

Sure. I think my biggest concluding thoughts as far as imagination in this conversation go is that it's honestly a. It wasn't a huge sacrifice for me to donate my kidney. It didn't have a huge impact on my life. And I think it's people like you, Maria. You learned and you, Ted, that have really been really putting in the work to help make the world a better place with respect to this, to Christians and kidney diseases in general.

And you guys are just inspiring me to get more involved and put in more work so that I can also help people, help more people out. So, it's been lovely talking to you and, yes, this is a cool, really cool experience.

Len Usvyat

Yeah. No, Chris, I'm just again, thank you very, very much. Just, you know, obviously, in conclusion, I do want to say I think, and this is meant to be education and outreach in a way. So I do think I really want to thank you all for your time, and I just that's I think I mentioned to you before, I think this will be available, for, for public viewing and everything.

And again, I do want to acknowledge that March 13th is World Kidney Day, which is recognized. I mean, hopefully it's pretty, it's, it's a very, very timely discussion. So, I really want to thank you all for your time in every way possible. Thank you.

Maria Ferris

Thank you.

Ted Ferris

Thank you, thank you.

Len Usvyat

Thank you all for your insight into kidney transplantation and the personal, meaningful impact that it has on real people's lives. Thank you to our listeners for joining the Renal Research Institute for this episode of Frontiers in Kidney Medicine and Biology. We invite you to connect with us on our social media channels and stay tuned for future episodes as we continue sharing insights and advancements in kidney research.