

HELPING HANDS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TRANSPLANT SUPPORT NETWORK

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VOLUME ONE ISSUE 7

MAY 1997

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Newsletter time arrives again and with it

as always, a mixture of good news and sad news. With springtime upon us, this issue has a number of features which I am sure will be of interest to readers old and new, including developments for the TSN, forthcoming events and articles of interest.

There is much to look forward to in the coming months and this edition will set out both the challenges that lie ahead for the TSN in particular, and some of the events that are scheduled to take place which will benefit transplantation in general.

CLIFF AUSTIN Editor

UPDATE ON JACKIE BABACIUK

Some of you will remember Sam Hamilton's article on Jackie Babaciuk published in April last year. Since then Sam has written a short update on how Jackie is getting on.

For those of you who have not read the original article, Jackie was born with a hole in her heart and subsequently developed pulmonary hypertension. Her lungs eventually deteriorated to the point where a combined heart lung transplant was necessary. Jackie was only the third heart-lung recipient to be transplanted by the Freeman Hospital's lung transplant team led by Mr John Dark, in June 1988, at a time when she had been given just 6 months to live. Jackie was bedridden and required a continuous supply of oxygen merely to survive. The operation turned her life around to the point where, after an initial recovery period, Jackie began participating in sporting events at the European and British transplant games. Hard won medals in shot put, badminton and long jump were tangible proof of her soaring quality of life since the operation. Jackie speaks for all the players when she says "None of us are great sportsmen! It doesn't matter how good you are, just that you can play at all".

However, in early 1994, Jackie began to experience chronic rejection. This is where the body's white blood cells or immune cells, normally responsible for fighting infection (and therefore having a protective role), become "confused". These immune cells recognise the new organ as being a foreign body and therefore attack, or reject it as if they were fighting an infection. Until recently, Jackie received the usual courses of conventional treatment for rejection, which had unpleasant side effects, so it has taken almost two years for her to begin to feel well enough to participate again in competitive sport.

UPDATE - Since the article was first published, Jackie has been diagnosed with osteoporosis, a bone thinning condition. In Jackie's case, medical treatment for this condition would be inappropriate, and unfortunately, the weakened state of her bones has meant that she has had to give up her sporting activities.

In 1996, Jackie fought off a prolonged episode of rejection and underwent laser treatment to keep her one remaining vocal cord in good working order (they were both damaged during her original organ transplant). Now that the rejection has stabilised, Jackie is making some changes in her lifestyle to help her cope with the osteoporosis.

After such an eventful 1996, Jackie simply says "I've never been a moaner. Plenty of people would like to swap places with me. I accept the problems I have and just get on with life."