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Donated kidney saves brother's life

Brothers in arms

MARANA BRAND VAN HULSTEYN

They exude optimism and are simply glowing with good health.

That is why it is hard to believe that brothers Sean and Russell Adriaanse are sharing a pair of kidneys. Even more amazing, is that the brothers have just completed the Cape Argus Cycle Tour, a mere 10 months after Russell (from Goodwood), donated one of his kidneys to his then severely ill brother Sean (from Parow).

Sean (41) was born with chronic deteriorating kidneys and in August 2010, he had to make the impossible choice when flu did not want to clear: have a kidney transplant or ... At that stage he only had eight percent kidney function left.

Shortly after he told his family, both his brothers - Russell (38) and Lyle (30) - offered to donate one of their kidneys. Russell was tested and was a match.

Before the operations in May, Sean's health deteriorated rapidly. "It was hard in the end," Sean recalls, but these things happen. It took time to adjust and understand, but I have strong faith and immediately trusted that everything will go well."

Russell remembers there was fear and concern in his heart before his harvesting operation. "I never doubted my decision, though. He is my brother and it would be selfish not to donate my kidney. I want my brother to live," he says.

And tough his operation was. The cut through four layers of muscles in his side, was about 20cm long. Afterwards he had a very painful few weeks during which every movement of muscles and ribs was excruciating.

When one listens to Sean, it seems that his experience was a walk in the park. Although he has to take a handful of expensive pills for the rest of his life, he regards himself as lucky. He gives Russell all the glory for his unbelievable gift of life and love.

After the transplant, Sean convinced Russell to participate in the Argus as part of a team, but it was almost not to be.

Due to severe stomach cramps the night before, Sean decided not to ride the Argus as he didn't want to take any chances. He

dropped Russell off the next morning and went to the doctor, who said it was nothing really, and Sean raced back home to get his gear and rushed back to the Argus. The team had already left at around 08:00. He got away with the last riders at about 10:00. They did not finish together, but achieved their goal nonetheless - and both feel 100 percent healthy.

"Three people in our team with healthy kidneys didn't make it over the finishing line, but both Russell's kidneys did: one in his body, one in mine!" Sean laughs.

Russell says this proves that both a donor and a recipient can have normal lives afterwards.

"I haven't imagined that I will do this. I appreciate life much more now."

They strongly feel that people should register as organ donors. "The majority of people don't have a problem to donate their organs, but they don't register or at least inform their families of their wishes. So those organs that can save seven lives and help many more, just go to waste," Sean says.

"I was lucky. I had brothers, but so many others are not, waiting forever on organs."

To register contact the Organ Donor Foundation on 021 426 0198 or info@organdonor.org.za, or see www.odf.org.za



Sean Adriaanse and his brother, Russell, in their Cape Argus gear. Photo: Leon Steenkamp



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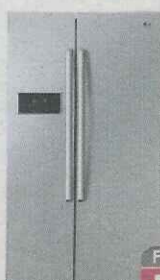
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