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Donors' Evaluation of Their Lives Following the Diagnosis of Liver Failure and Transplantation Surgery

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Introduction: Liver transplantation affects not only recipients 'but also donors' lives. Little is known on the effect of liver failure and transplantation surgery on the donors' lives.

Aims: The aim of this study was to explore the donors' experience of life.

Methods: The sample consisted of 16 living donors of liver transplant. Thematic analysis was undertaken in parallel with interviews during which an interview guide was followed. Anonymised interview transcripts were analysed following established conventions.

Results: Findings showed that participants evaluated their life in terms of limitations, awareness of the need for lifestyle changes, emotional changes, changes in character and mixed relationships. Emotional changes included both negative and positive emotions (feeling reputable, feeling like being born again, rewarded in after life). Changes in character included both worsening of character (becoming half human, turning into an aggressive person) and positive changes in character (becoming more of a believer, a stronger person, a humanist). Mixed relationships included feeling supported by loved ones and doctors, reduction of burden of care because of lack of support, formation of a special bond between donors and recipients, not feeling supported by potential supporters and worsening of close relationships.

Discussion: Some findings (experience of negative emotions, lack of support from others) could be interpreted in terms of existing psychological theory. Other findings (worsening aspects of character, experience of positive emotions, improvement in aspects of character, formation of a special bond, worsening of close relationships) not reported before could be viewed as targets for educational programs for donors.