College Pitcher in Recovery After Saving His Mom With a Liver Transplant

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The closing pitcher for the University of San Francisco's baseball team is now in recovery after saving his mother's life with a liver transplant, The Los Angeles Times reports. After several hours of surgery, Joey Carney, 22, is now one of only a few college athletes to become an organ donor.

The transplant, which took place at the UC San Francisco Medical Center, removed 40 percent of the left part of Carney's liver to function as a new organ for his mom, Paula Carney, 50, who was diagnosed with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and end-stage liver cirrhosis in 2014. At the time, she was given two years to live.

Four family members were tested until Joey insisted that he be considered as a potential donor. The star athlete had just begun an unlikely career as a relief pitcher for USF after becoming the first player from an open tryout to make the team in nearly two decades.

Carney and his family scheduled the surgery for early June, just after the end of the baseball season. The living transplant took about 11 hours to complete and was watched over by the wife-and-husband team of Nancy Ascher, MD and John Roberts, MD, both nationally renowned transplant specialists at UCSF, one of the largest transplant facilities in the country.

Post-surgery, Joey has returned to his family's home in Millbrae, California, and is aiding his recovering by walking more than three miles a day. Paula responded well immediately after the transplant but has since experienced some setbacks and is still in the hospital. Over time, doctors say the portion of his liver that Joey kept and the part he donated are expected to grow to about 85 percent of the organ's original size.

In the meantime, Joey must wait eight weeks before he resumes his regular physical workouts. If all goes as planned, he hopes to have enough time to get in shape for next season's opener.

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