LISTEN: Transplant Surgeon Reflects on the “Incredible Gift” of an Organ

NPR’s “Fresh Air” recently interviewed Joshua Mezrich, MD, about what it’s like to save lives as a transplant surgeon.

January 18, 2019 By Casey Halter

Need some uplifting liver disease news this week? Check out NPR’s latest episode of Fresh Air, which features renowned transplant surgeon Joshua Mezrich, MD, PhD about. In the interview, Mezrich discusses what goes into performing a successful liver, kidney or pancreas transplant and the ways in which people’s lives are forever changed by both donors and the doctors who perform the surgeries.

As a surgeon, Mezrich, who is also an associate professor in the Division of Multiorgan Transplantation at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Wisconsin, has performed hundreds of transplants. He has also assisted in operations involving other organs and has a new book out about his experiences in the operating room, titled When Death Becomes Life.

Mezrich recounts all that a successful transplant surgery entails—including a discussion of the different types of donors and the stamina and time it takes doctors to complete each one.

Mezrich also discusses the judgement call doctors have to make about giving livers to patients with alcoholic liver disease (ALD), saying, “It’s a disease like other diseases, like hepatitis C, like all the other things we transplant with more complex names.” He cites studies that show surgeons can achieve good outcomes in patients with ALD as long as they have the treatment and support to deal with transplant aftercare.

To listen to the entire interview, click here.

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