US Marine Donates Liver to Stranger

The two live only two miles from each other.

August 8, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

When U.S. Marine Corey Weber found out it was possible to donate part of your liver to someone else, he immediately wanted to be involved; he soon learned about one woman's story—and that they were the same blood type.

Pennsylvania resident Katie Sproull was diagnosed with Primary Biliary Cirrhosis (PBC) over 10 years ago and has been battling it ever since. There is no cure to PBC, but it can be maintained with treatment, according to medical experts.

"It is a slow destruction of the biliary ducts of the liver. So, your liver is cleaning out all of your toxins and…your bile ducts start to become unusable; they have a hard time filtering things out," Sproull told Pittsburgh's Action News 4. "There's [medicine] that will slow the progression…. Some people respond to the meds. I, unfortunately, did not."

After finding out from a doctor that she was in stage four of the disease, Sproull knew she would need a transplant. Knowing how long the waitlist is for a liver transplant, she decided to share her story on Facebook.

It took only two days for Weber's wife to message Sproull about her husband's interest in donating his liver. The women then found out they live about two miles apart and even worked at the same company.

"In the middle of the application process, my wife shared Katie's story and I was like, 'She's local; this is crazy,'" Weber said. "Not only is she local, she's O negative. I know how hard it is to find O negative; I'm O negative as well."

After doctors at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) cleared Weber to donate half of his liver to Sproull, the two met at a dinner July 1 and the procedure was completed just two weeks later. The transplant was a success, and the two spent less than a week in the hospital.

Sproull said she is feeling "great" post-surgery and is grateful to have more time to spend with her young daughters. "I don't even think Corey actually even understands the magnitude of what he's done. He seems to just be that person," she said.

“For me, being generally healthy and especially with UPMC and the donor team doing the background check on your health the way they do, how thorough they are, I just trusted that I could do this and they felt safe with me doing this, that I was a good candidate and that everything was going to be OK,” said Weber. “If you have an opportunity to do something like this, why not do it? This is obviously a huge impact to her life, to her kids’ life.”

To learn more about organ transplants, read “Left Off Liver Transplant Waiting Lists” or “UChicago Medicine Has a Promising New Organ Transplant Storage System.”

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