

First, this is the worst way to say 'Hello' to some people that I have not spoken to in a while but hello!

Second, it took me a week to decide to write this letter and another week to actually write it. And some of you may have already heard about this from my mom. What I am asking for is selfish. It is downright greedy. But I promised some people whom I love dearly that I would do it, so I am. I need a liver.

For the past 7 years I have been living with a disease called Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC).

PSC is a scarring of the biliary tubes in the liver that causes strictures. These strictures result in bile backing up in the liver and the death of hepatocytes (liver cells). Because the liver is a regenerative organ, it took 11 years for my disease to gain the upper-hand and kill liver cells faster than they can regenerate. I am losing weight rapidly (on the flip side, it is nice to eat whatever you want and still lose weight), my eyes are now bilirubin yellow, and I am easily fatigued.

As a result, I am now on the liver transplant list at [Transplant Center].

Normally, someone who needs a liver would just get on the list and wait for someone else to pass away and then swap livers with them. The problem for me is that the MELD score -- which is used to determine how sick you are and how likely you will receive a cadaver liver -- does not work well with PSC patients. It doesn't accurately reflect the severity of damage being exacted on PSC infected livers. And unfortunately, while I wait for my condition to get worse so that the chance of getting a cadaver liver improves, the likelihood I will develop cancer and other complications increases. And if cancer rears its head, it becomes unlikely that I will receive any kind of liver. While cancer treatment requires an immune system, a liver transplant requires patients take immunosuppressant drugs to prevent liver rejection for the rest of their life. The classic Catch 22 -- those crazy pilots.

But enough about me, let's talk about you. If you are younger than 55 years old, in the 5'6" to 6' height category, are roughly 200 pounds (give or take 30 pounds), have type O + or O - blood and if you have been thinking to yourself, "I need to lose 2 to 3 pounds (temporarily)" or "What's missing in my life is a hockey stick-shaped scar down my abdomen" or "I need to take up to a three-month sabbatical from my job" or "Narcotics, you say?" or "I need proof that I am not made up of puppy dog tails/sugar and spice" or "I've always wanted to visit Denver or (insert alternate city with a good live liver transplant center here)!" or "How cool would it be to lord over me and say, 'But I gave you my liver!'" then please read on.

I have a proposition for you: I will trade you half of your liver for all of the items quoted above and with zero medical costs to you (small print: this does not include the cost of not working for up to three months -- that is a real cost that I will work with you to cover). My health insurance will cover all medical costs -- it really will. It's actually cheaper for insurance companies to pay the upfront costs of a live liver transplant than to pay all the costs that will accumulate while I wait for a cadaver liver.

But wait, there is more! There are real risks. There is a 0.2% chance you could die, a rate of 1 out of 500. That doesn't mean it won't happen -- it has happened to 0.2% of the people that have donated. Other potential complications include pain, infection at the incision site, incisional hernia, pneumonia, blood clots, hemorrhaging, need for a blood transfusion, allergic reaction to the anesthesia, difficulty processing

fats, gastrointestinal reflux, bile blockage/leakage, narrowing of bile ducts, blood clots, intra-abdominal bleeding and pulmonary embolism. Most of these are low or extremely low in likelihood but they are possible complications.

Despite these risks, hundreds of live liver donation transplants take place every year. There are places throughout the country that have been very successful in these surgeries.

In a 2015 University of Minnesota study of 107 living liver donors, it found: 11% reported their health was worse than before the procedure. 10% reported their health was better than before the procedure. And 79% reported their health was the same as it was before the procedure. 34% reported incisional discomfort, 15% reported heartburn, 25% reported intolerance to fatty meals and 22% self-reported symptoms of depression. 97% reported they would donate regardless of their now known complications. (source: <https://aasldpubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/lt.24304>)

I have tried to provide as much information as I can and below are some excellent links to more information, but if you are considering this (and WOW, if you are) then I encourage you to do your own research. Google every question you can think of; this is obviously a big deal and the last thing I want is for someone not to realize what they are getting into (at least until the sedatives set in):

- This FAQ from Columbia University answers a ton of basic questions: <http://columbiasurgery.org/liver/living-donor-liver-transplantation-faqs>
- This link is to the national organization that determines the rules and regulations for organ transplants: <https://unos.org/donation/living-donation/>
- This link is for a video from Dr. Charles Rosen of the Mayo Clinic. Although the video is drier than the Sahara Desert, it proves the good doctor is by no means an actor and is informative: <https://youtu.be/jTGtmTYOKPs>

After you have done your own research and want to see if you qualify (um, double WOW), please contact me and you can start the long vetting process at [transplant center's contact information.]

Also, if you would like to work with me to select a different transplant center for both of us, I would be happy to do that. My insurance has national coverage and I would be more than happy to come to you if that makes things easier and if the transplant center in your area is well-respected and experienced.

Finally, if you are still reading this then you truly are a friend. I don't mean because you are considering donating. I am asking to take an organ out of your body and put it in mine and that is just plain crazy talk. But rather, you are a friend because you care about what's going on, thank you.