

LONGEVITY PERCEPTIONS IN PATIENTS WHO HAVE HAD THEIR KIDNEY TRANSPLANT FOR 25 YEARS OR LONGER

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Survival of a renal transplant beyond 25 years is a relatively rare event with median length of graft survival 11 years. Numerous studies have described predictors of poor renal transplant outcomes, but no studies have described longevity perceptions of individuals who have had their kidneys for 25 years or longer. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine longevity perceptions of 19 renal transplant recipients who had their transplants for 25 years or longer. The question asked of the subjects was “To what do you attribute keeping your kidney for such a long time?” Appropriate institutional approval and human subjects protection was followed during the study. The sample was obtained from an informal support group which includes only those who have had their kidney transplant for 25 years or longer. A semi-structured phone interview was audio-taped and transcribed. Data were examined using thematic analyses. The sample consisted of 19 participants (7 male, 12 female) ranging in age from 43 to 67 years, with a mean age of 52.8 years (S.D. = 6.82). Transplants were performed between 26 and 36 years ago, with a mean of 30.7 years (S.D. = 3.2). Themes emerged included competence, autonomy, relatedness, faith, normalcy, and luck. The participants voiced statements of competence in the care of their kidney, autonomy in health decisions, and relatedness to support group members, transplant games, and/or to the donor’s family. Striving for a sense of normalcy, faith, and luck were also shared by the participants.

