

August 24, 2022

NKR Response to People Magazine Author Cindy Watts: Article on Kidney Search by Record Executive Emmanuel Zunz

Cindy Watts
c/o People Magazine
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

RE: People article published August 24, 2022

Dear Ms. Watts:

I recently had the pleasure of reading your article, Record Executive Emmanuel Zunz Needs a Kidney – and He'll Donate \$1 Every Time This Story Is Shared.

Thank you for spreading the word about the need for living kidney donors. More than 95,000 people like Mr. Zunz are in need of a kidney transplant, and the wait for a kidney from a deceased donor can be as long as 10 years. Very few people with kidney failure can wait that long. In fact, 5,000 people die every year waiting for a kidney transplant and another 5,000 are taken off the deceased donor list because they are no longer healthy enough to receive a transplant.

For this reason, increasing the number of living kidney donors is crucial. The National Kidney Registry (NKR) applauds stories like yours and campaigns like Mr. Zunz's for raising awareness about this important issue.

I do, however, want to address a couple of important issues related to your article.

Your article states that Mr. Zunz "was assured the wait for a new kidney wouldn't be longer than six months." It's not clear what person or organization made this assurance, but I want to clarify that the NKR makes no assurances about the length of time it will take to find a living donor kidney for one of our voucher holders. As a general guideline, 80% of patients who enter paired exchange through the NKR are transplanted in less than 90 days, but there are many factors involved with finding the right living donor kidney match for each recipient, so we do not offer any guarantees about timing.

On Mr. Zunz's donor page (<https://eztransplant.org/>), to which you link in your article, he specifies that donors must be under 50 years of age, and must be blood type O. I

understand that this content comes from Mr. Zunz, not you, but I do still want to point out that there is no official cut-off age for a living kidney donor. People well into their 70s can donate a kidney—it is all about the health of the potential living donor. We review this and some other common misconceptions on the Kidney Donation Facts section on our website: <https://www.kidneyregistry.org/for-donors/i-want-to-learn-more-about-livingkidney-donation/kidney-donation-facts/>

In addition, when donating through the NKR, you do not have to be the same or a compatible blood type with your intended recipient. Because the NKR is able to find the best match for each recipient from among its donor pool, which is the largest in the world, there is no need for a donor to be a match for the person they want to donate a kidney to. You can learn more about our kidney matching system in this blog post: <https://www.kidneyregistry.org/for-donors/kidney-donation-blog/you-can-donate-a-kidney-even-when-youre-not-a-perfect-match/>

Why are these things important? Donating a kidney is a major commitment, and there are many reasons why someone might be hesitant. At the NKR, our mission is to educate the public about living kidney donation, refute misconceptions about kidney donation, and offer a wide range of assistance and support to donors (financial assistance, legal support, complications protection, etc.) to remove all disincentives to donation. To this end, whenever we see inaccurate information that may dissuade a potential donor from becoming a living donor (such as limitations on age or blood type), we want to make sure we set the record straight.

Thank you for allowing me to clarify these issues, and for helping spread the word about living kidney donation. As a living donor myself, I know what a life-changing gift living kidney donation is, for the donor as well as the recipient. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Michael Lollo
Chief Operations Officer