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The Gift Of Life: The Reality Behind Donor Organ Retrieval



Synopsis

"Organ transplants are a very controversial and unique area of medicine. Those of us who work as Transplant Coordinators were frequently referred to by hospital staff as 'organ vultures' behind our backs, but also many times within earshot. I felt this reference to extremely ugly birds was unfair and short sighted. I did say once in a while to a difficult staff person, 'if your kid needed a transplant wouldn't you hope that someone was out there being as ethically aggressive about finding an organ as they can?' That usually shut them up quickly." -- from the Foreword

One of the miracles of modern medicine is the ability of surgeons to transplant organs. Often, it's the only way to save the life of a person whose own kidneys, lungs, liver or heart are failing. But with barely 2 percent of critically ill patients suitable for organ donation, the demand far exceeds the number of organs that become available. The Gift of Life is about the remarkable world of organ transplant coordinators, profiles of the men and women who locate and arrange for the donation of organs from those who are dying and wish to live on in others' bodies through this selfless gift. Traci Graf tells the riveting story of this unique and demanding branch of medicine. Transplant coordinators review the medical files and charts on all patients whose condition is so severe that they are not expected to live. Their task is to convince the patient (or the patient's family) to allow organs to be donated immediately upon death. The transplant coordinator works to save lives by finding and obtaining consent for as many organ donations as possible. In The Gift of Life, transplant coordinator Traci Graf recounts the stress, drama and joy of working long hours dealing with emotionally distraught family members and overworked medical staff, and the emotional toll of a job that means the difference between life and death for the recipients. Packed with riveting first person narrative, The Gift of Life will appeal to anyone interested in modern medical practice and the lives and challenges faced by nurses and doctors who work to offer critically ill patients the gift of life thanks to donors' foresight and generosity.

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Customer Reviews

I was delighted to find this book providing a rare glimpse into the niche profession of working in an Organ Procurement Organization. What I didn't expect was for the book to be such a pertinent tool in assisting me in that profession in understanding a lot of the clinical concepts without going over my head. I have read, highlighted, and regularly refer back to some of the passages in the book to assist me in my career working with families in organ donation. I feel that Ms. Graf's career background of nursing and then organ donation was perfect for her to write of her encounters. Her raw, honest style in conveying her incredible experiences along with her frustrations are refreshing and directly applicable to some of my own encounters in this field. Her accounts of the donating patients she worked with are both touching and heartbreaking and I can empathize with the maddening feeling of when a person's personal bias gets in the way of saving a potential recipient's life. She nailed it on the head when she wrote about loving your family on a deeper level after serving in this career. I've always cherished the time I have with family but it is different now and it's comforting knowing there are people out there like Ms. Graf who can empathize with this challenging and humbling profession and the new way it makes you look at life. Although, I do think that those NOT working in this field will also find this book helpful as you may have to make a choice whether for yourself or someone you know on the matter of donation; either way it's an intriguing read. This is a pioneering work in this profession. I hope to see more from Ms. Graf and hope it inspires other professionals to take up the pen. Thank you so much Ms. Graf for writing this book!!!

I loved this book! Traci Graf RN recounts her experiences as a Transplant Coordinator in a compelling little book. Each chapter is short and holds your attention. While the author isn't the best writer, the fast pace and suspense of her storytelling makes up for the run-ons and odd punctuation. And that's ok because she's not a writer by profession. By the way, I had purchased this book for a little research paper. I had only intended to skim bits and pieces of it, but I ended up reading the whole book. Highly recommend.

As a retired trauma surgeon I can appreciate what goes on in brain death....the angst, heartache, family meetings and tears, intense work of the nurses and coordinators and finally, if all criteria were met, the donation. Chevron was a thirteen year old child and my first loss. He went on to give better life to five children by donation. Traci put into words my thoughts and feelings. Very powerful book which should be read.

Very informative and wonderfully written! It helped me to understand what happened when my 18 year old daughter became an organ donor just 3 months ago. Traci Graf gives factual accounts of different people who in their death unselfishly gave gifts to others. Thank you Traci for dispelling myths and explaining just what happens when someone gives the gift of life. Jen

An excellent book that explains and helps the public understand more about organ donation. The author takes the reader on a journey into the hospital where lives are forever changed.....her words and stories are inspiring, especially helping write my own living will. I've said yes to being an organ donor. For many years.....now I know more and understand just how important this is.

This book is amazing, obviously Ms. Graf has a gift for writing. As an RN I can really identify with this story. The heart wrenching stories of the families involved in organ donation are expertly shared. The writing makes the reader feel like she is a part of the story. I am so impressed by the transplant coordinators and the other staff that make organ donation possible. I did not want the book to end and I can't wait for her next book.

Nurse Graf takes us right into the operating room and the hearts and minds of donor families, while at the same time dispensing practical advice for organ donation. Parts of it will leave you cringing with the details of extraction of organs or even what happens in the embalming process, but this is an easy-to-read guidebook on the donation process.

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