I
t's one thing knowing that your
father's chances of survival rest
on having a new kidney but it's
quite another deciding to give one
of your own. Mark had no doubts
about giving his father, Gordon, the
kidney he needed and even joked
that he could have a kidney, at a
stage when he was unsure that
everyone has two!
Mark and Gordon have been
interviewed and photographed for a
new thought-provoking exhibition
and portfolio, produced with an
educational grant from Novartis
Pharmaceuticals. The aim of the
materials, which are freely available
to renal and dialysis centres
throughout the UK, is to raise
awareness of the option of living
donation and encourage discussion
about living donation amongst
family and friends.
Whilst more than 5,000 patients are
waiting for a kidney transplant,
there is an increasingly severe
shortage of donor organs. And,
although living donor kidney
transplantation results in better
clinical outcomes than deceased
kidney transplantation, the rate of
living kidney donation in the UK is
only 28 per cent, compared to 50
per cent in the US and 90 per cent
in Japan.
After spending time interviewing
and photographing donors and
recipients before, during and after
the transplant, Dr Jennie Jewitt-
Harris and Victoria Lush have
produced this revealing portfolio of
images which link with powerful
personal quotations to offer a visual
journey through the process of
living donation. The thoughts,
compassion and challenges of life
are captured as those going through
this life-changing process
experience a roller-coaster ride of
emotions.
The exhibition and patient portfolio
have been put together with input
and support from renal experts.
Kidneys from live donors have the greatest chance of working well.

Involvement and encouragement have come from Mr Chris Rudge, Managing Director of UK Transplant, Lisa Burnapp, Consultant Nurse, Living Donor Renal Transplantation at Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust and Mr Andrew Ready, Transplant Surgeon at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

Mr Chris Rudge of UK Transplant says, “These new materials are an important step in raising awareness of living donor transplantation as an option for patients with kidney failure. They cut through the medical jargon that sometimes faces patients, relatives and friends and tells them what it’s really like to go through it. It’s an inspiring insight for everyone involved.”

Many of the quotes used in the portfolio also address the underlying concerns and misconceptions that people may have about living donation. The aim of using the quotes is to reassure possible donors and recipients that these are normal feelings and to put the emotions during the various stages of donation into context and perspective.

As one donor said, “You can’t worry about whether you might need a spare kidney in the future. You’ve got to deal with the problem you’ve got now, not the one you might never have.”

Another donor stressed that, “Some people think I’m brave – I just want a healthy husband back again.”

And as a recipient said, “After the operation, all the lights were switched on.” Many patients find the mental and physical effects of life on dialysis difficult to cope with personally and find “dialysis makes life difficult for the whole family, not just me.”

Others continually stressed the beneficial effects after transplantation of being able to lead a life without the ties of dialysis and as one recipient said, “The joy of going on a normal family holiday is something I can’t put into words.”

“Transplantation is very special and quite extraordinary. 18 months down the line and I still wake up feeling a surge of life.”

Whilst not an option for everyone, to many, living kidney donation is “the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Research shows that patients would like more information and this exhibition and portfolio are an important step in that direction. The “emotions of living donation” materials have been produced to give an honest and open visual account of the process of transplantation, that will encourage patients, their relatives and friends to talk about it.

If you would like a copy of the portfolio, or you would like information sending to hospitals within your constituency, please contact Nikki Bryant on telephone number 01276 692255 or via email nikki.bryant@novartis.com.
EMOTIONS OF LIVING DONATION
Photographs and personal quotations from kidney donors and recipients have been used to develop new materials for renal and dialysis units throughout the UK.

Holly is donating her kidney to her brother John.
“I really hope he can have a normal life again. I’d like John to have what I have in life.”

Tapati travelled from India to donate a kidney to her sister.
“I could see my sister’s suffering and she was crying so much. All I could think was how quickly can I give my kidney.”

Maggie donated a kidney to her 16 year old son Sam
“The operation was the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Susan donated a kidney to her partner Richard.
“We had to do it for the kids. We had no family life.”