

Sisters Share Special Bond After Rare Living-donor Transplant

Jessica Eveleth will celebrate her 21st birthday on April 20, but she has already received the gift of a lifetime. Her sister Jamie, 18, donated a segment of her small intestine to Jessica in a rare living-donor transplant at the University of Illinois Medical Center at Chicago on March 23.

([PRWEB](#)) April 21, 2004 -- Jessica Eveleth will celebrate her 21st birthday on April 20, but she has already received the gift of a lifetime. Her sister Jamie, 18, donated a segment of her small intestine to Jessica in a rare living-donor transplant at the University of Illinois Medical Center at Chicago on March 23.

The sisters, from Estherville, Iowa, share matching surgical scars but they are opposite in appearance and personality.

"We look different and act different," they said in unison.

Jessica, who plans to begin pharmacy school in the fall, enjoys hanging out with her friends, shopping and studying. Jamie likes staying at home to read, watch movies and take care of her cats. Both young women have a strong sense of family and a determination to help each other.

"I had a feeling I was going to be the donor," Jamie said. "Even before we had the blood tests I knew that I wanted to do it."

"I was thankful that she was a match," said Jessica, whose brother, mother and father were also tested as potential donors.

Jessica was completely healthy until November 1998. Her small intestine became twisted and she required surgery to remove the damaged tissue. Doctors were able to attach a few inches of her remaining small intestine to her large intestine, allowing her to live without a colostomy.

But without a normally functioning small intestine, she could not adequately digest food or absorb nutrients. She required total parenteral nutrition, which was administered at night while she slept.

Yet during the past five years she's lived a relatively normal life. Many of her friends did not know that she required the special nightly feedings administered through a central line.

But in recent months Jessica had become extremely ill, suffering from multiple central line infections. Her physician, Dr. Stephen Karl in South Dakota, learned about living-donor small intestine transplantation and referred her to UIC for the surgery.

"Jessica was a perfect candidate for living-donor small bowel transplantation," said Dr. Enrico Benedetti, associate professor of surgery at UIC and division chief of transplantation surgery. "We know that living-donor surgery is preferable for an otherwise healthy person."

"Living-donor surgery offers patients the opportunity to be transplanted before they become gravely ill and while they have the best chance at a full recovery to lead productive lives," said Dr. Mark Holterman, associate



professor of surgery and division chief of pediatric surgery.

UIC surgeons removed more than six feet of Jamie's small bowel, leaving her with approximately two-thirds of her small intestine.

Both Jessica and Jamie are doing well following the surgery and are looking forward to returning home to Iowa. Jamie was discharged from the hospital five days after surgery and has had no complications. Jessica was discharged two weeks after surgery.

"This experience has brought them closer together," said the young women's mother, Dawn Eveleth. "I know this saved Jessica's life and we are very, very thankful."

Based on Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network data as of January 31, only three other patients have received a living-donor small-bowel transplant from a sibling in the United States.

UIC is a leader in adult living-donor small-bowel transplants, performing more than any other center in the country. Only 17 adult patients have received living-donor small-bowel transplants in the United States. Nine of these patients were transplanted at the medical center.



Contact Information

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