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March 13, 2011

Kidney Transplants

To the Editor:

Re "How Not to Assign Kidneys," by Lainie Friedman Ross and Benjamin E. Hippen (Op-Ed, March 6):

Both Drs. Ross and Hippen and the United Network for Organ Sharing, in reviewing the allocation of kidneys, are trying to figure out how to do more with less. The real problem is the shortage of living kidneys and the lack of knowledge of many transplant centers and potential kidney recipients regarding kidney paired donations.

The new allocation policy concentrates on kidneys from deceased donors. It pays little attention to the fact that individuals needing a kidney, regardless of age, can receive one within weeks or months, not years, by finding a direct living donor. Direct donors do not have to be compatible with the recipient.

The National Kidney Registry and the majority of America's top 20 transplant centers are using a sophisticated computer program to match incompatible direct donors by performing paired exchanges. When recipients enter this system, the concept of age prioritizing is eliminated.

The recipient with the direct donor can be quickly transplanted if he should be matched in a swap. The recipient will receive the "best" kidney available based on preferences set by the medical information entered into the system.

Ira Brody
Chief Communications Officer
National Kidney Registry
Babylon, N.Y., March 8, 2011