

The Ultimate Mother's Day Gift: Son Donates Liver to Save Mom's Life and Makes History, Thanks to Use of 3D Technology

The Finlaysons and the Intermountain Healthcare Transplant team at Intermountain Medical Center are now telling their story

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA, May 10, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- What Mother's Day gift do you get for the mom who has just about everything she needs, except the one thing that will save her life?

“

I'd do it again – in a heartbeat.”

Brandon Finlayson, Liver Donor

If you're Brandon Finlayson, you give your mom part of your liver.

“He's my rock star,” says Gwen Finlayson referring to her son, Brandon. “No, I'm just spare parts,” says Brandon, 37,

says with a grin.

Although the two like to joke, receiving the gift of life from her son in a rare surgery at Intermountain Healthcare's Intermountain Medical Center, was not an easy gift to accept for Gwen.

In early February, Gwen, 63, received an early Mother's Day gift, part of her son's liver in the first ever left lobe living liver transplant in Utah.

The Finlaysons and the Intermountain Healthcare Transplant team at Intermountain Medical Center are now telling their story.

In 1991, doctors diagnosed the mother of four with autoimmune hepatitis, which is when the body's immune system turns against the liver cells. Then five years later she was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and told she would need a transplant within three years.

Gwen Finlayson stretched that to 22 more years, but last year her doctors told her it was time for a new liver and put her on the national transplant list.

“I've done my homework. Let's do this,” Brandon told his mom.

Gwen's number one concern with this offer was for her son. She wanted him healthy and strong for his own five kids. Brandon said he wanted to make sure his kids and their cousins all had grandma around.

After a series of tests Brandon was found to be a match and the surgeries were scheduled.

“Scheduled surgeries are one of the benefits of a living donor liver transplant,” said Manuel Rodriguez-Davalos, MD, medical director of Intermountain Healthcare's Living Donor Liver Transplantation Program, and a transplant surgeon. “They can receive a liver transplant before they become too ill, while waiting on the transplant list.”

Dr. Rodriguez-Davalos also turned to some high-tech help for this surgery, working with specialists at Intermountain Healthcare's Transformation center to make a 3D-printed model of Brandon's liver.

Surgeons referred to the model before and during the lengthy surgery.

The live-liver donor transplant is one of the most delicate, technical and time-consuming of all surgeries, said Dr. Rodriguez-Davalos.

"Normally we take the right lobe and take about 60 percent of the healthy liver from the donor to give to the recipient. That said, with the use of current 3-D imaging and 3-D printing technology we can perform precision liver surgery and obtain a left lobe graft which gives safer and faster recovery for the donor with equal or improved outcomes for Mom" said Dr. Rodriguez-Davalos.

Unlike other organs, the liver regenerates. Within months both livers should grow to about 90 percent of the normal size.

Three months post-surgery both the Finlaysons are getting back to life and feeling grateful.

"I'd do it again - in a heartbeat," said Brandon.

"I've got a reset button, a huge blessing and opportunity," said Gwen. "I've got lots of dancing to do at weddings and a trip to the Canadian Rockies on a train."

In 1983, Intermountain Healthcare performed Utah's first solid-organ transplant. Since then, the program has distinguished itself as a pioneer in the field of transplantation with the first pediatric living donor liver transplant, Utah's first adult living donor liver transplant, Utah's first split-liver transplant (one liver split into two, saving two lives), and the world's first program to transplant hepatitis C positive livers into hepatitis C negative patients with excellent outcomes.

Sign up as a living organ donor at www.IntermountainHealthcare.org/DonateLife

Intermountain Healthcare is a Utah-based not-for-profit system of 24 hospitals, 160 clinics, a Medical Group with some 2,300 employed physicians and advanced care practitioners, a health insurance company called SelectHealth, and other health services. Intermountain is widely recognized as a leader in transforming healthcare through evidence-based best practices, high quality, and sustainable costs. For more information about Intermountain, visit intermountainhealthcare.org.

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