

Kidney donor encourages 'once in a lifetime mitzva'

By DANIEL OPPENHEIMER and CARLY ETTINGER

In the Talmud, it says, "He who saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire world."

Chaya Lipschutz, an Orthodox Jew living in New York, has found her passion in saving lives by matching willing kidney donors to recipients in need.

"It's a once in a lifetime mitzva," said Lipschutz.

Lipschutz first got involved in the cause four years ago when she saw an ad in the Jewish Press, a New York weekly for the Orthodox, seeking a kidney donor. She felt compelled to do all she could to help the man in need, even though he was a complete stranger to her.

Although Lipschutz was ultimately not a match for him, she later donated a kidney to Marcelle Bale-Krieger (left), a total stranger. Lipschutz now spends her time matching willing kidney donors to recipients in need.

"The operation was the easiest part of the donation process," Lipschutz said, when compared to the difficult task of successfully matching a donor and recipient.

After seeing more ads asking for kidney donors in the paper, Lipschutz became increasingly involved in advocating for the issue and persuading others in the community to consider donating as well. Her brother, Yosef, followed in her footsteps and successfully donated a kidney to a stranger as well. He was the first of eight matches that Lipschutz has made so far.

"Three-quarters of my time is devoted to this," said Lipschutz regarding her work promoting kidney



Courtesy of Chaya Lipschutz

Chaya Lipschutz (right) donated a kidney to Marcelle Bale-Krieger (left), a total stranger. Lipschutz now spends her time matching willing kidney donors to recipients in need.

donations.

One person that Lipschutz is currently attempting to find a donor for is New York-native, Max Cohen, a 64-year-old widower and father of seven. Cohen has been searching for a donor for over a year and a half and has now registered at the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, at the recommendation of his doctor.

There are a series of medical tests that the donor must pass in order to be a transplant candidate. Often times, willing donors, including Lipschutz, have been turned down when there may be complications regarding the donor and recipients compatibility. The donor must have a compatible blood type with the recipient and must be in good physical and psychologi-

cal health.

With approximately 90,000 people currently waiting for a kidney transplant, Lipschutz urges more people to consider performing this act of chesed to help save a life. She also notes that, in most cases, the donor only requires two to four weeks to recover from the operation.

"Living with one kidney presents no difficulty to the body as long as you are healthy," said Lipschutz.

Also, former Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Israel Ovadia Yosef concluded that kidney donation, to both Jews and non-Jews, is halachically acceptable and a mitzva.

Patients may be on the waiting list for years before they can be provided with a kidney transplant, during which

time many patients must undergo kidney dialysis. Dialysis mechanically performs the function of the kidneys by removing toxins from the blood, but the process takes multiple hours a day while the patient is effectively immobilized.

Lipschutz set up a booth at the Jewish Marketplace Expo in New York, was interviewed for National Public Radio's This American Life and several newspapers, set up advocacy Web sites and spoke publicly at Jewish and non-Jewish events about kidney donation.

Though from New York, Lipschutz has a close connection to Minnesota. She came to St. Paul during many summers to learn at the Bais Chana Women's Institute and has many fond memories of her time in Minnesota.

"People would come from all over the world to attend this great institute," said Lipschutz, particularly noting the

teaching of Rabbi Manis Friedman as one of the main reasons why she attended Bais Chana 15 times.

Lipschutz dismisses her choice to donate a kidney as extraordinary, and rather views it as an important mitzva she could perform.

After already donating one of her kidneys, Lipschutz still strives to do even more.

"But who will donate kidneys to all those other people who needed them?" she asked, "What if they don't find anyone to donate a kidney to them? How I wished I had a whole bunch of kidneys so I could save all those lives."

For information about kidney donation e-mail Lipschutz at: KidneyMitzvah@aol.com.

Daniel Oppenheimer and Carly Ettinger are editorial interns at the American Jewish World.

Hadassah extends fertility of cancer patients in Jerusalem

(JTA) — Doctors at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital have devised a method for extending the fertility of young cancer patients.

Employing a process used for adult female cancer patients, an Israeli medical team succeeded in harvesting and freezing eggs from the ovarian tissue of young girls about to undergo chemotherapy, giving them hope of preserving their fertility.

For several years, women facing chemotherapy have been able to preserve their fertility by having an ovary surgically removed. The

ovary is then sliced and frozen. After treatment and recovery, the ovaries can be re-implanted in the body and function normally.

Using the same technique, the Hadassah team treated eight girls ages five to 20 over the past three years. The team demonstrated that even among the youngest girls, ova, or eggs, could be extracted, left to mature in the laboratory and then frozen.

The experiment's published results were presented last month at the annual conference of the European Society for Fertility.