A Review of
Organ Transplants
Making the Most of Your Gift of Life
Author: Robert Finn
Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

This excellent book is one of several works commissioned as part of the Patient-Centered Guides series. As such it is not authored by a medical professional or patient as are so many other transplant related books. Rather the medical journalist author builds content based on interviews with dozens of people intimately involved with transplantation, including donors, recipients, physicians, nurses, social workers and other transplant professionals. Right in his Preface, the author warns us to expect differing experiences and differing opinions, and this is one of the reasons I find the work so interesting and worth reading for anyone involved or about to get involved in this subject.

Let me share right up front in this review that I was pleased to be quoted extensively from my own writings in this book which in turn lead to an invitation to offer a back cover recommendation quote. So pardon me if I tend to be slightly partial to Finn’s content and approach. Having made that clear, I feel the real value in his book may be that it is “written” by so many others through those quotes and interviews. A challenge in many patient authored books, my own included, is that their story is really only one of many such experiences, and each of those experiences may be very different and unique, despite the threat of complications and difficulties we may share. For the pre-transplant patient (and their families) who are creating their own story in real-time living, some such difficult experiences may produce self-fulfilling prophecies, creating challenges that might not exist without such reading. On the other hand, there is much to be learned from sharing such experiences, especially as they offer proven ways of dealing with similar challenges from those who have gone before us on this transplant journey. In this book one finds a balance and counterpoint to many such events in the style used for the compilation of many patient and other sources’ inputs. The author uses an italicized font to alert the reader when the content is taken from quoted sources.

The topics he offers take the readers from “Considering a Transplant” to every aspect a patient could be asking about, especially as it relates to available resources (also summarized in a detailed handy thirteen page appendix for easy reference) to support both during and after the transplant surgery, including a look into the future of the process. There are separate chapters detailing the differences in each type of organ transplant, with yet another chapter devoted to “other types of transplants” (i.e., cornea, bone marrow, tissue, intestine, whole limb, etc). Each gives in clear and often bulleted form the essentials and differences one needs to know to understand that transplant. The other chapters cover subjects common to all such procedures, from the waiting through finances and even traveling for a transplant. The subject coverage is comprehensive and easy to read, complimented for the more serious student with a Notes and an Index section for easy access to further information.

This book would certainly prepare a patient for asking the right in-depth questions related to their own situation of the medical professionals at any given transplant center. AS I
was quoted on that back cover: “More than a fact-filled guide, Finn captures the spirit and emotions experienced by many who have successfully gone before, offering all an inspiring message of hope that you are not alone on this long and winding road.”

Note: Organ Transplants is available from O'Reilly Press and Amazon.com

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Brief bio:
Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is now a volunteer with NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His book, A Gift from the Heart, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.