

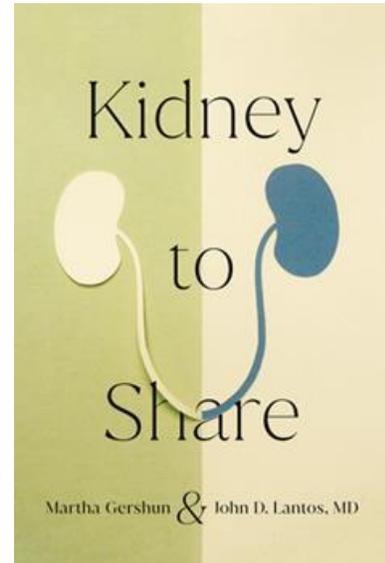
A Review of

Kidney to Share

Authors: Martha Gershun & John D. Lantos, MD

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

My best rating for reading a new book: book arrives, I open first few pages before adding it to my 'to be read' stack, but I can't put it down and finish it that same day. *Kidney to Share* is one such book! Martha Gershun is a living kidney donor, offering her kidney to a stranger, or at least in the beginning she doesn't really know her recipient, but that relationship changes in unique ways as her story unfolds. The author shares her every step in the long process of offering her kidney, sharing with the reader the complex and daunting process that at times seems to want to keep her from giving that gift. And that is where this book really has a lot to offer as she takes us on each step along the way in her Mayo Clinic journey with its rewards and frustrations. She gives a good balance between praising the excellent program and staff of that renowned institution while pointing out the many obstacles that too often cause would-be donors to give up and not follow through on their original willingness to give an organ to another. Those obstacles are presented as opportunities for improvement, not just complaints for the sake of complaining. As I read the trials she encountered, some were so ridiculous that I had to laugh out loud, like when she had to ship a blood sample on dry ice back to the distant center which I would love to describe here, but that would take away your own reaction when you read it in the book and her words of frustration.



That's the theme of the story which does have its happy ending but only because she and her supportive husband/family never give up despite road blocks the system puts in her face again and again. Gershun's chapters are interspersed with chapters explaining the process and history behind the living donation concept by Dr. Lantos, giving interesting insights in parallel to Martha's journey as it advances. In his contributions we learn the ethical and medical issues that try to protect everyone involved, especially the donor, even from themselves. The authors achieve a nice balance between the human story and the intellectual insights of the process involved in being a living organ donor. The book includes an extensive set of resources including related organization web site links, ten pages listing all the many works that are cited throughout, and finally, eight pages of index that will satisfy anyone's interest in going deeper into this important topic.

Their story of donor and recipient continues up to the present pandemic challenged world we all are facing as this book is published. It offers a very timely and transparent insight into this world of living donation with their strong appeal to take steps to improve the patient experience that would encourage so many others who might be willing to share that 'extra' kidney to save another's life. That's what Gershun's sharing is all about, encouraging change and inspiring others to decide to save a life with their gift despite today's roadblocks.

Note: **Kidney to Share** is available in hard cover and other formats on [Amazon](#) and many other outlets, including of course, the publisher, ILR Press/Cornell University Press.

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with The Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free online in thanks to his donor family and can be read online at <https://www.rjwitte.com/changeofheart/GiftFromTheHeart/>.