

## BEYOND NUMBERS: LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF KIDNEY- TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS

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**F**or people with kidney disease, transplantation is said to provide a better quality of life, and is thus considered to be a better treatment option than is dialysis. Transplantation does not, however, promise an illness-free existence. While a great deal of literature is available from a biomedical perspective, there is little qualitative research that tackles the experience of transplantation amongst young people, and still less from a social work standpoint.

The present article presents the findings of a phenomenological study, which sought to explore the subjective experience of kidney transplantation amongst young people who lived the transition from pediatric to adult care. This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological approach, involving semi-directed interviews with five people, three of whom received their kidney transplants as children, the other two as young adults. An in-depth analysis of their narratives revealed the paradoxical nature of the kidney transplant experience for these individuals; existing between self and other, sickness and health, and at times, between life and death. The liminal nature of transplantation was found to be an important quality of the experience, thus leading to an analysis of the experience in relation to the theoretical concepts of liminality and rites of passage. This analysis culminates in the introduction of the term transliminal-self, to encompass the complexity of the experience. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion regarding the relevance of the subjective experience for the practice of medical and allied health professionals who work with transplant recipients. ■

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