

Smiths Medical pals endure lifesaving transplant

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Smiths Medical colleagues, Cindy Engelhardt (picture front) with colleague Lisa Huckins.

A lifesaving kidney transplant for Cindy Engelhardt of Smiths Medical, in Keene, US, was closer than she could have imagined thanks to the kindness of co-worker Lisa Huckins.

Regulatory affairs technical writer Cindy is now on the road to recovery after her work colleague, senior programming analyst Lisa, demonstrated the ultimate act of friendship by donating a kidney to her.

Lisa's kindness has provided Cindy with the best chance of beating a potentially fatal genetic disorder - polycystic kidney disease (PKD) - which cut short the lives of her mother, grandfather and great grandfather. Cindy's two children have also been diagnosed with the disease, though she hopes that advancing medical research into PKD will provide better treatment or even a cure for them in the future.

Cindy had endured the illness for more than 20 years but was recently told she would need dialysis or a transplant within two years as her kidneys had weakened to just 25 per cent of normal capacity.

Cindy was told to start looking for potential donors and, by good fortune, Lisa volunteered and their blood groups matched. The fact that PKD is a genetic illness means that the kidney donated by Lisa will never be susceptible to the condition.

"The risks of the operation to me were the same as having a baby. So, how could I not do it for my best friend," said Lisa.

The transplant took place in May, though Cindy still faces an uphill battle over the next few months as she is taking an arduous course of medication to ensure her body doesn't reject the new organ.

She is now back at work, but still requires time off for regular visits to the hospital for check ups and treatment. Lisa has made a full recovery and is also back at work.

"Through all of this I could not have hoped for a better friend than Lisa. She is my hero and has given me the best chance at a 'normal life'. I can only hope that 30 years from now I still have a part of her in me," said Cindy.

"Smiths Medical could not have been a better place to work either. Both before and after the