

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Columnist: I wish I could be on the transplant list

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That fist-sized, eight-ounce wonder muscle that is the human heart has to be the world's most valuable, most productive and, ounce for ounce, most efficient machine.

Every 24 hours, it beats an average of 100,000 times and pumps roughly 2,000 gallons of blood to energize the whole body. Over a 70-year period, it will beat 2.5 billion times.

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Lacy J. Banks

PHOTO GALLERY



[Life on the transplant list](#)

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At 64, I probably have gotten 2.2 billions beats from mine.

And now my surgeon, the University of Chicago's Dr. Valluvan Jeevanadam, tells me I need a new heart because my mitral valve is defective and my left ventricle is enlarged from years of heart disease.

My leaky valve is the chaotic conductor of a symphony of suffering -- shortness of breath, fatigue, sore and swollen feet and ankles, a hacking cough, stiff joints, cold limbs, chills.

Seven years ago, Jeevanandam performed a successful triple-bypass operation on me, and tests reveal those arteries are still open. But it's that lousy valve that has been breaking down over the years, to where it is now greatly hampering my circulation.

I represent about 5 million Americans presently suffering to varying degrees from congestive heart failure.

Unfortunately, this past Monday, my urologist, Dr. Glenn Gerber called with new bad news: A biopsy of my prostate determined that it is cancerous.

That has temporarily eliminated me from consideration for a heart transplant.

Now, I'm fighting two deadly enemies: prostate cancer and a progressively defective heart.

I'm depending upon prayer, a miracle and the skill of my doctors to stop the spread of my cancer and repair my heart.

I have so much to still live for as I approach the end of my Sun-Times career, which will reach 36 years in August.

My wife Joyce and I have planned a wonderful vacation to celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary this July, and I hope we can still do so. I also have three grown daughters and five grandchildren I'm enjoying seeing grow up.

Regardless of what God decides to do, I won't be shortchanged. And I sure won't complain. I've already been blessed with treasure beyond measure.

How to become an organ donor

To join the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, visit Lifegoeson.com or call (800) 210-2106 and put your name on the confidential list, which is only released to organ and tissue procurement personnel and medical examiners after all lifesaving efforts have failed.

Gift of Hope, an Elmhurst-based non-profit, also answers questions about organ donation and gives information on how to become an organ donor at Giftofhope.org