

Science/Medicine/Health/EU/Austria

**Organ transplants: Patient - "Organ transplants are life savers"**

Sub-headline: Young British woman with cystic fibrosis suffered for more than 20 years before being saved by a donor organ

Brussels (APA) - "We don't need to hope that one day they'll find a cure. In many cases, there's already a cure, and it's called organ donation." British woman Emily Thackray suffered from cystic fibrosis for 22 years. She had only a few months to live – but then came the call from the transplant centre.

"Everything has changed now. I don't feel ill any more. I have a house and a job", said the 27-year-old on Tuesday at a media workshop on organ transplantation organised by the EU in Brussels. The story of her illness is a long one, but it turned into a real success story for her and for modern medicine when she received a transplant in 2007.

It started when she was still a baby and was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis: "At first, it didn't bother me too much. But the illness, which leads to thick secretions in the lungs and infections, developed and, by the time I went to university, I had only 40 percent of normal lung function. At the age of twenty I was in a wheelchair and then needed a constant supply of oxygen whenever I wanted to go out."

With cystic fibrosis, organs increasingly lose their ability to metabolise oxygen through the blood. The condition is worsened by potentially fatal infections.

Emily Thackray explained: "Each infection worsened the capacity of my lungs. I was spending a month in hospital and a month at home. In 2005, the illness had advanced to the point that I was told a lung transplant was the only hope. It was explained that I had only about 12 months to live, but the waiting list for a donated lung was, on average, 18 months long at that time."

The next two years were terrible. "I was fighting for every breath. I had my bags packed just in case the call came, and was never more than two hours away from a transplantation centre. It wasn't a life, just an existence."

Emily lived like this for 22 months before the telephone rang with the news that a donor organ was available. During the long months of waiting she had called the transplantation centre again and again to enquire timidly whether she had been forgotten.

"I just wanted the chance", she explained. "The doctors took a risk with me, because my condition was already so bad. I spent two months in intensive care, and my recovery was a slow one. But now, everything's changed."

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