

An Independent Man



“I went from being myself to barely living...unable to function.”

I had always been an independent man – until my kidneys started failing. It started gradually – so gradually that I can’t tell you when it started. It was a feeling that something was not quite right. But my wife was ailing and I didn’t want to trouble her or my kids. I kept my visits to the kidney clinic secret. No one could tell from looking at me – I had to be strong for my wife and I prayed for her health and recovery.

It was in January when the love of my life left me. I still didn’t say anything to my kids – couldn’t say anything. Within three months, I went from being myself to barely living, unable to drive, unable to function. The loneliness and depression were suffocating and my kids noticed.

And then it slipped, or I let it slip – a cry for help. “I need to go see my doctor again.”

The response was immediate but measured, cautious. They know me well, my kids. “Dad... do you want me to take you?” my daughter asked and I conceded, out of necessity. From then on, she attended all appointments with me.

As my kidneys continued to decline I developed the most persistent, crazy itch. And my legs began to swell so I couldn’t get around easily, yet I was losing weight. I was beside myself!

My daughter read all the patient materials I got from the clinic. She is a smart cookie. She found it somewhere in that booklet. “Dad, it doesn’t matter how many pills you take, it isn’t going to help until we take care of your diet.” I looked at her and went “So, do it.”

She took charge of my meals and went through things I could do for myself like good skin care to help me feel better. She made sure I got good nutrition so I stopped losing weight and cut back my salt. I have to admit, that was tough for a while. But within two weeks, I was itch free and my swelling had almost disappeared. My mood has definitely improved – I even smile and crack a joke here and there. The change was remarkable. It was a lesson to us, the tremendous effect my diet could have on how I feel. Even though things are never going to be the same without my wife, there is some return to being myself again. I am still an independent man!

Note: This story is an artistic extraction of an interview with the patient and his daughter. It includes true details and actual quotes where possible. It has been written in prose for effect.