



Official Journal of TESMA

Regenerative Research

www.regres.tesma.org.my
E-ISSN 2232-0822

Tissue Engineering
and Regenerative
Medicine Society of
Malaysia

Regenerative Research 7(1) 2018 92

TO RAISE PEOPLE'S AWARENESS – A FILM ABOUT TISSUE DONATION

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ARTICLE INFO

Published: 26th August 2018

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KEYWORDS

Tissue donation

SUMMARY

In a new film, shot in March 2018, the DGFG (German Society for Tissue Transplantation) explains what altruistic heart valve donation is and what it means for the recipients of that transplants and for the numerous patients on the waiting lists. Something we come across again and again in our daily work is the fact that tissue donation is completely unknown to most people. They don't know anything about this possibility to help other people even after death. People are often unaware of what it means for patients, as with the patients from our new film, to be able to live a normal and healthy life again. Even today in Germany we've got the situation that the need of tissue transplants like heart valves is far higher than their offer. We, at the DGFG, want to improve the people's awareness for tissue donation, we want to sensitize people to it. That's why we made this film:

If heart valves do not function properly, severe states of exhaustion occur. Every physical effort becomes a great challenge. In the film the patients Dane Lees (Brisbane, Australia) and the young mother Signe Lenz-Somdalen (Fürth, Germany) tell their very personal story: Lees was born with a heart valve defect. He was diagnosed shortly before his 17th birthday. In 2011, 20 years later, he got a cell-free/decellularized donor heart valve in the MHH (Medical School Hannover) with the prospect of no further, risky open heart surgery. For check-ups Lees travels every few years from Brisbane to the MHH. Today, seven years after surgery, he's fine. He can do sports again and enjoy his life to the fullest.

Signe Lenz-Somdalen was born with a hole in her cardiac septum, which caused her aortic valve to deform severely. Her heart valve has been surgically corrected. After that her heart valve worked well for many years. But after her first pregnancy, her condition worsened. In her early 30s she had to have a second operation. Thanks to a cell-free/decellularized donor heart valve, she was given the chance to become a mother a second time. Without this special heart valve from a tissue donor, her second daughter would not be in this world today.

The DGFG is an independent non-profit organization. The DGFG has built up a network of numerous German clinics, tissue banks and transplanting institutions. The head office of the DGFG is in Hanover. The DGFG produced a series of educational films (in German with subtitles in English) that illustrate the meaning of tissue donation. The first film, focusing on corneal donation, has already been very well received and illustrates the importance of such educational work for raising people's awareness of tissue donation.

Length of the film: 6 min 41 sec.