

# KIDNEY LIFE

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Funmi's story of overcoming challenges and reaching success



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# Patient Story

## from Funmi Lawal



**Funmi has battled and overcome serious health issues over the years. This is her inspiring story.**

**I was born in Camden, London, and when I was three years old my parents returned to Nigeria having completed their studies in the UK. So, I grew up in Nigeria and I graduated in July 1987. I returned to the UK and worked in the civil service for 10 years. While working I completed an MSc in ADMIN at the London School of Economics.**

I travelled to Dubai after my son was born to join my husband. I worked at Orga Systems and then in 2002 I flew back home to South London from Dubai to have my second baby – a daughter. The pregnancy was problematic as the doctors couldn't control her blood pressure. Seven days after my baby was born the unimaginable happened. I suffered a major stroke. By the time I reached hospital my brain haemorrhaged and I was having multiple seizures. During a CT scan my heart stopped. Doctors brought me back to life. My family was told I was unlikely to recover from the stroke and that I would be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. My husband said he didn't care about that. Surgery followed to remove the clot from my brain, and I was in and out of consciousness for the days that followed.

Recovery was hard. Initially I couldn't walk, I couldn't talk, and I couldn't do anything on my right side for about seven months. After about three months I could walk again, but I was unable to speak or use my right hand. A lot of love from my family kept me going coupled with many sessions of therapy - physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy. My mum looked after my daughter for the next 18 months. My son was cared for by his dad, but it was very difficult for everyone.

After my husband left in 2006, I needed help with my children to get them to school and to cook for them. My ability to get meaningful employment reduced and I ended up working in the care sector, cleaning people's houses.

I recovered, but the pre-eclampsia and uncontrolled high blood pressure during my pregnancy, which had led to my stroke, had also damaged my kidneys. That was a blow. I started dialysis in 2009 and I received my cadaveric kidney in April 2011. It is working quite well and my blood results are ok.

I have done a lot since my transplant. I set up my own business called clip-knix, designing and producing adaptive front fastening underwear for women. I did this because following my stroke I struggled with privacy when nurses were washing and caring for me. I couldn't find underwear for people with disabilities so I created my own which means you don't have to bend or stretch and can keep some privacy and dignity when someone is caring for you. I'm pleased to say it's going well and my products have been recognised in speciality clothing awards.

My husband had been diagnosed with hypertension at age 27 and he started dialysis after my stroke in 2003. He moved to Birmingham when we separated in 2006 to work as a lecturer at Aston University. He left Aston two years later after inheriting a religious title when his father died. We were living separate lives at that point and he was dialysing everywhere he went in Africa and the Middle East. He had his first transplant in 2012 and that failed on his travels. He had another transplant in May last year but struggled with complications, spending five months in hospital. My son stayed with his dad during Covid-19 but in July 2021 at the age of just 22 he sadly died. Following this tragedy my husband moved back to live with me. We are still married. My daughter is now 20 years old.

I am happy to be active now in many fields. As well as running my business I am Vice Chair of Royal Free Kidney Patients Association (KPA) and a trustee as well as a KPA representative in Edgware. I am an advisor to Billion Strong, a worldwide not-for-profit organisation that empowers and unites the global community of people with disability to create positive change.

I would like to thank the family of the donor from whom I received my kidney, it has given me good health, and enabled me to spend precious time with my children and I am looking forward to the future.

