

## Donor says he got thousands for his kidney

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*Editor's note: Since the FBI arrested a Brooklyn businessman in late July on federal charges of organ trafficking, CNN has been conducting a worldwide investigation into the sale of kidneys using willing donors and willing recipients from China to Israel to the United States.*



Nick Rosen says he got \$20,000 to donate his kidney and lied to the hospital's transplant team.

**TEL AVIV, Israel (CNN)** -- Four years ago, a young, cash-starved Israeli answered an ad in a newspaper for a kidney donor.

"I decided I wanted to make a positive change in my life and do something different," Nick Rosen told CNN. "So I saw an ad in the paper and it said, 'Kidney Donor Wanted.' And called the ad in the paper, and they asked me my blood type."

Ultimately, Rosen flew to New York and underwent surgery at Mount Sinai Medical Center to remove one of his two healthy kidneys.

"Let's say I donated a kidney and received compensation," he said.

Rosen's story is one of several that have come to light in recent weeks as part of a worldwide CNN investigation into what appears to be a widespread

black market in human organs currently under scrutiny by authorities in the United States and Israel.

Rosen says he was paid \$20,000 for his kidney -- something he admits he lied about in interviews with the hospital's transplant team.

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What Rosen did -- and what the man who received the kidney did -- violated a 1994 U.S. federal law that forbids the selling or purchase of live organs for cash. He not only got his money, but made an 11-minute documentary film he called "Kidney Beans" to show how easy it was to sell an organ. A portion of the documentary shows him lying on a bed, covered in cash he says he was paid.

In a written statement, Mount Sinai told CNN: "The pre-transplant evaluation may not detect premeditated and skillful attempts to subvert and defraud the evaluation process."

"Mount Sinai's transplant screening process is rigorous and comprehensive, and assesses each donor's motivation," the hospital said.

A hospital medical source put it more bluntly: "We were duped."

According to kidney transplant doctors, the process of pre-screening, blood-type matching and other related medical issues normally takes two months before any surgery. During that time, both recipient and doctor have to make several visits to a team of doctors, social workers and perhaps even ethicists before a final decision is made.

Hospitals often ask donors to sign documents which ask whether they have received any compensation for donating a kidney or other organ. But no documentation is required to prove a family connection.

The chief of nephrology at Mount Sinai later said hospitals and doctors are primarily concerned with medicine. "We're not detectives. We're not the FBI," Dr. Barbara Murphy said. "People can, on occasion, deceive us."

But what Rosen did was not unique, according to the World Health Organization, which says 10 percent of kidney transplants worldwide are believed to be illicit.

Dr. Eli A. Friedman, a leading kidney specialist, teacher and researcher at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, said the United States leads the world in kidney transplants. About 16,000 of them are performed every year, he said.

"That would mean that somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 transplants in the United States might fall in the categorization of being illegal," Friedman said.

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- CNN investigating what appears to be a widespread black market in human organs
- Israeli man says he received \$20,000 for his kidney
- He says he lied to the hospital about the money he received
- 10 percent of kidney transplants worldwide are thought to be illegal

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