Orla Looks Forward to Her First World Transplant Games

Contributed by Colin White
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A Co. Tipperary woman is off to Australia next month (AUGUST) as a member of the Irish team in the World Transplant Games – and it's all thanks to her brother Cathal who last year gave her the gift of life by donating a kidney to her.
Orla Hogan-Ryan, Summerhill, Nenagh, is looking forward to competing in the life-affirming games, where, between them, the Irish team have 13 new kidneys, five new livers and one new kidney-pancreas.

For Orla, life took a dramatic turn for the better last June when she was successfully transplanted with her brother's kidney. She had been on dialysis for five years, and during that time represented Ireland in the European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Slovenia (2004) and Hungary (2006.)

"It is just over a year ago since I received my kidney transplant, and now I am delighted to be able to take part in these World Transplant Games. It is quite a turnaround from back then when being on dialysis had such a restrictive effect on your life," explained Orla, who has received great support from her husband Ger.

"I am eternally grateful to my brother Cathal who gave up one of his kidneys for me. These Games are all about thanking our donors – and donors everywhere – who give so many people the gift of life.

"In my case, I know my donor – many others don't know where the organ comes from, but they are no less appreciative for that."

The squad will travel to Gold Coast, Australia, on Tuesday, August 18th. Orla has been supported by a number of local fund-raising initiatives, including a bag-pack at Tesco and a golf tournament. She will compete in race-walking swimming, ball-throw, and ten pin bowls.

"It's not really about winning, it's all about taking part. We honour our donors by showing that organ transplantation works. That's a vital message to promote as the need for a life-saving organ transplant can visit a family with devastating speed, and at any age, even babies and children," said team captain Mick Dwyer, who ten years ago had a kidney transplant.

Team manager Colin White paid tribute to the determination of the athletes taking part. "They have worked very hard to prepare for the Games, and they will help to show the world that you can enjoy a great life after receiving a transplant," he said.
The full Irish team is:

Paul Donohoe (Cavan); Michael Dwyer (captain, Dublin); Deirdre Faul (vice-captain, Dublin); Tony Gartland (Wicklow); James Hannon (Longford); John Loftus (Limerick); Philip Martin (Dublin); Tom Metcalfe (Dublin); Linda Meyler (Galway); Catherine Murphy (Cork); James Nolan (Kildare); John Paul O'Neill (Kilkenny); Paul Prendergast (Dublin); Orla Hogan-Ryan (Cork); Charlie Ryan (Cork); Leonard Ryan (Dublin); Angela Sherlock (Dublin); Harry Ward (Dublin); and Vienna White (Donegal.)
The team will be accompanied by manager Colin White; team doctor Emer Kilbride; physio Clare Hogan; and Mark Murphy, the CEO of the Irish Kidney Association, who is also a member of the World Transplant Games governing body.
The team kit is sponsored by Shire Pharmaceuticals.

A special website has been built – www.transplantteamireland.com – where supporters can follow the team's progress and send on messages of support. The site profiles each athlete and will carry daily updates on how the athletes are getting on.

For an organ donor card FREETEXT the word 'DONOR' to 50050.