



# AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH

BACK IN 1992, when I was 34 years old, I was suddenly confronted with a rapidly deteriorating lung condition. Before I could realise what was going on my life had completely changed. I went from being a sporty young man into a patient dependent on oxygen day and night.

To reach the first floor in my house I had to use a chair lift as I could no longer walk the stairs. Despite my poor condition, I decided I wanted to exercise as much as possible. Not for cardio training, but just in an attempt to stop the further deterioration of my muscles.

I went to a nearby swimming pool where I swam short stretches. In fact, I could swim just the length of the line that connected me to the oxygen machine that stood on the edge of the pool. In 1994, I was put on the waiting list at Eurotransplant for a high-risk but necessary double lung transplant. In February 1996, I heard that Eurotransplant had found an organ donor match for me.

Since my transplantation I have been active in many different areas. I became Dutch national champion in the 200-metre sprint (category men 50). I founded the Life for Kids foundation to create awareness for the importance of exercise for pediatric patients before and after transplantation (I cycled from the Netherlands

to Malaga in Spain visiting various pediatric transplant centers along the way to draw attention to this topic).

Fit for Life! is a new initiative of the World Transplant Games Federation, where I am currently a trustee. A healthy lifestyle is important for everyone, but it's especially important after an organ transplant. Poor lifestyle habits can increase the risk of organ rejection. Fit for Life!, proudly supported by Astellas, is designed to help transplant recipients live full and active lives through ongoing physical activity and participation in organised sports. The initiative promotes being active and getting involved in sports post transplant, something which I personally endorse and showcase in my everyday life.

I also initiated an expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro for transplanted patients, which was supported by the medical team of the transplant center of the University Medical Center Groningen.

Being on top of Kilimanjaro with other transplanted patients was an unbelievable experience! Words fail to describe how thankful I am to my unknown donor. The fact that I can still enjoy life and promote the importance of organ donation has only been possible thanks to 'the gift of life' which I have received. 🇳🇱

**Andre Lassoij**, chairman of the sports committee of the World Transplant Games Federation (WTGF)

PHOTO DR. E.A.M. VERSCHUUREN (UMCG)