

# The Heart Transplant

By Dr. Maria Edlin King & Dr. Bradley Hobbs

## Economic Choice

Many think that economics is about money (and a small aspect of it is) but it is really about choice under scarcity. I use this exercise to drive home this point and others including:

- ✓ differences in values
- ✓ normative vs. positive issues
- ✓ supply
- ✓ demand
- ✓ opportunity cost, and
- ✓ sunk cost.



In the real world, we have a problem with organ transplants. There are quite simply more demanders than suppliers. Economics is about choice.

We have just “harvested” a heart from a young man who was in a fatal automobile accident. There are six Level “A” candidates attached. To whom should the heart go?

Questions for Debrief:

- Why did you choose your particular recipient?
- What criteria did you use?
- Did your values enter into the decision?
- What is “normative” analysis?
- What is “positive” analysis?
- How does opportunity cost play a role here?
- What about sunk costs?
- How is this an “economic” problem?
- How might we use incentives to increase the supply of organs?

## **Some basic biographical information of each participant:**

### **Amanda Tell**

Amanda is a 33 year-old, married mother of three. Amanda is a homemaker who is active in her children's school programs and the local Parent-Teachers organization. She has been diagnosed with degenerative heart valve disease.

### **Bill Tuscon**

Bill is a 56 year-old plumber. He is active in the local plumbing union and has served as a master plumber to a number of apprentices. In the local plumbing world, he is known as a great teacher and a generous man to work for. Bill has a genetic predisposition towards high cholesterol and his health have been, shall we say, "less than stellar." He is married with two grown children and three grandchildren.

### **Phil Yont**

Phil is a 52 year-old graphic artist. He is divorced and single. Phil loves his work and is known for his early entry into computer graphics. Phil is an alcoholic and has been through recovery a number of times, but is still dealing with his problem. His recent heart attack severely damaged the heart muscle.

### **Alice Newman**

Alice is a freelance writer in a large metropolitan city. AIDS complicates her heart problem. She has been on the new AIDS medications and her response to the medications has been extraordinarily good. Her doctors want her to go through some additional testing in order to determine why her body has responded so well to the drugs. They consider her to be a prime subject for research advances.

### **Evelyn Short**

Evelyn is an heiress to BTC—Big Tobacco Company. Her grandfather started the business and she is independently wealthy from the trust fund she inherited. Evelyn is active in the art scene and she was instrumental in helping to raise funds for the new art complex downtown. She is also an avid fitness buff: she competes in triathlons regularly and is ranked in the top 20 women in her state. During a trip to Nepal, she contracted a viral infection which damaged her heart muscle severely.

### **Francis Polt**

Francis is a prisoner in the Big Swamp Correctional Facility. Francis is in the joint for a second-degree murder in which he beat a man to death with an axe handle. Polt has pursued a degree in criminology while in the joint and he is about to graduate at the top of his class. He is not a candidate for parole for another five years. His recent heart ailment is quite serious and doctors have given him only three to six months to live without the transplant.

### **Buster Cohen**

Buster is a twelve year-old, typical, American boy. He won the local skateboard tournament in his age division last year and he is known for his prowess on his Xbox. He has one sister sibling, Moonbeam, who is nine. They live with their divorced mom, Rachel. Buster was born with a hole in his heart and he has been waiting for a transplant for three years. He has recently taken a decided turn for the worse with his health.

# Biographical information in Narrative Form

## Amanda Tell

Good morning! My name is Amanda Tell; you may call me Mandy. I am 33-years-old and a married mother of three. I am a stay at home mom and am active in my children's school programs. I am also the president of the elementary school's Parent-Teacher Organization. I have been diagnosed with degenerative heart valve disease which has led to irreversible heart damage. I love my kids so much and I'm worried that if I die, no one will love them the way I do.

## Bill Tuscon

Hello. My name is William Tuscon but you may call me Bill. I am a 56-year-old plumber. I am married and have two grown children and three grandchildren whom I adore. I am active in the local plumbing union and have served as a master plumber to a number of apprentices. I love being a mentoring figure to my employees and am involved in their day-to-day lives as well as their work lives. I have a genetic predisposition (inherited from my mother's side of the family) towards high cholesterol and my health has been "less than stellar" over the years despite a concentrated effort to eat right and get some exercise.

## Phil Yont

Hello. My name is Phil Yont; my friends call me "Philly" because I love Philly cheesesteak sandwiches and am a baseball fanatic – you can probably guess my favorite team! I am 52-years-old and am divorced. I work in computer graphics and have had several awards for my early work in that field. I am an alcoholic. I attend AA meetings regularly but I struggle with my demons every day. I am currently sponsoring 6 new members and hope to inspire them to make changes in their lives that will benefit themselves and their families. I recently had a major heart attack which severely damaged my heart.

## Alice Newman

Good morning. My name is Alice Newman and I am a teacher at a high school in Tennessee. I have a severe heart condition complicated by AIDS. I work in my community to promote AIDS awareness to teenagers and young adults. I recently started a round of new AIDS medications and my body's response to it has been extraordinary. Doctors at a major research institute want to follow my progress and do additional tests to determine what makes me respond to the drugs so well in the hopes that they can make them work in other people.

## Evelyn Short

Good morning. I am Evelyn Short. My friends call me Eve. In 1960, my grandfather opened the BTC – Big Tobacco Company. Thanks to a generous trust fund, I am independently wealthy but money cannot fix my heart which was severely damaged by a viral infection that I caught when I was traveling in Nepal. I am active in the arts and helped to raise funds for the new arts complex that was built downtown. I recently formed a non-profit foundation to promote art education in disadvantaged schools. I compete in every triathlon that is available and I rank in the top 20 women in my state.

## Francis Polt

Hey. My name is Francis Polt; the guys on cell block D call me Frank. I'm doing a 30-year stint in the Big Swamp Correctional Facility for second degree murder. I am up for parole in five years. I landed here after beating a guy to death with an axe handle during a fight in a bar. I've spent my time on the inside getting an online degree in criminology and am about to graduate in the top of my class at the end of this semester. My plan for when I get out of here is to work with young men in my old neighborhood, providing them with legal counsel and helping to get them out of the cycle of violence that many of them see as a normal part of their lives. Without this transplant, the doctors only give me another three to six months to live.

## Buster Cohen

What's up!/? My name is Davis Samuel Cohen but everyone calls me Buster. I'm 12-years-old and I love skateboarding and video games! I even won a skateboarding competition in my age division last year. I have a pesky little sister named Moonbeam; she's nine and boy, she can be one big pain in the ..... well – you know. We live with my mom, Rachel. My dad split a few years ago after he found out I was sick. My mom says he is a worthless ..... oh, sorry – I'm not supposed to say that word either. I was born with a hole in my heart but unlike most kids with this problem, they can't fix me unless they give me a whole new heart. I've been getting sick a lot more often these days and am just too tired to do anything including ride my skateboard or go to school. I miss spending time with my friends.

# Heart Transplant Recipient Ranking Chart



<b>Recipient</b>	<b>G1</b>	<b>G2</b>	<b>G3</b>	<b>G4</b>	<b>G5</b>	<b>G6</b>	<b>G7</b>	<b>G8</b>
<b>Amanda Tell</b>								
<b>Bill Tucson</b>								
<b>Phil Yont</b>								
<b>Alice Newman</b>								
<b>Evelyn Short</b>								
<b>Francis Polt</b>								
<b>Buster Cohen</b>								

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