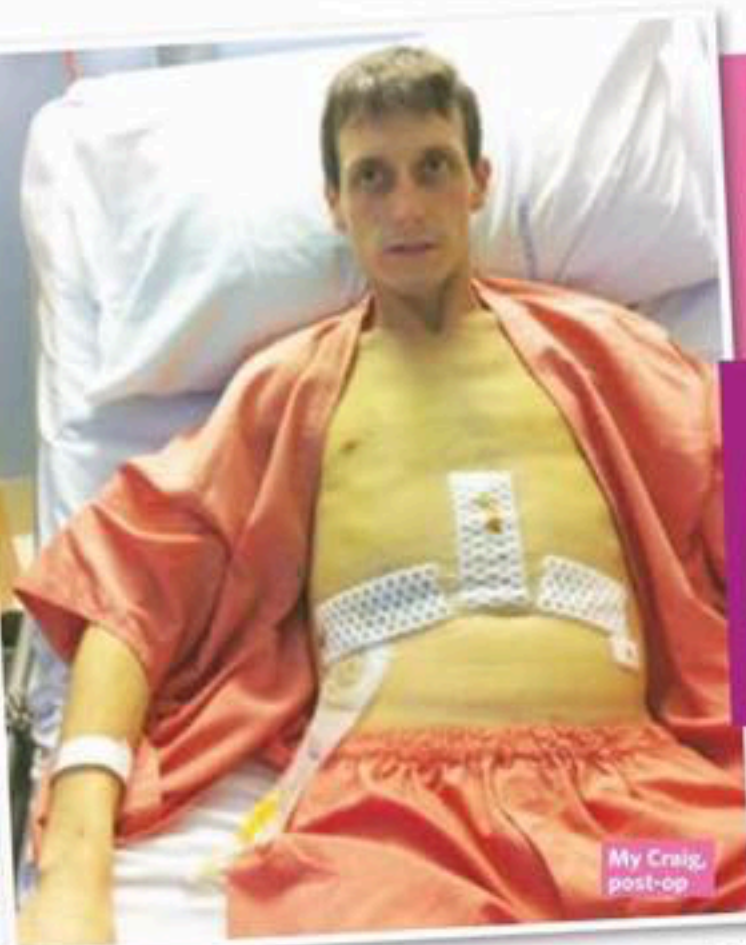


THE G OFL



My Craig, post-op

Rachel waited for that crucial phone call...



Rachel Draper, 32, Sheffield

As my partner, Craig, finished painting the living room walls, he flopped down on the settee.

'You look shattered,' I told him. 'Must be all the DIY,' he sighed. I wasn't sure. Craig hadn't been himself for months.

Initially, we put it down to the long hours he worked as a mechanic, and helping look after our daughter, Lily, 1.

But now the whites of his eyes had turned yellow and he'd lost 3st in as many months.

He needed to see a doctor, but you know what blokes can be like.

Finally, he agreed to make an appointment.

The next day, the GP called. 'He wants me to come back in straightaway,' Craig told me.

At the surgery, the GP

explained there was a problem with Craig's liver, and we were sent to the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield.

It was worrying. We'd thought Craig was just run-down. But this seemed serious.

Rare condition

A few days later, we learned that it was.

'You have a condition called primary sclerosing cholangitis,' the doctor told Craig.

It's a rare liver disease that causes scarring of the bile ducts and inflammation.

The cause is unknown.

The bombshells kept coming.

We were warned it could affect his immune system and blood. Drugs might help, but only time would tell.

'The worst-case scenario is you'll need a transplant,' the consultant said.

We were both floored. Craig had always been so healthy.

Life changed in an instant.

Craig spent as much time in hospital as he did at home.

He fought infections and

suffered from jaundice. His skin became red-raw. No amount of medication seemed to be helping.

I juggled my time between Lily and the hospital.

'I'm so sorry I'm not around to help more,' he said.

He was desperately missing being a daddy to our little girl.

A year after his diagnosis, in May 2012, we got some good news when I fell pregnant.

'That's amazing,' Craig smiled.

But, a couple of weeks later, his consultant called us into his office and told us what we already knew was coming.

'You aren't getting better. We need to put you on the transplant list,' he said.

Tears welling in my eyes, I gripped Craig's hand.

'Without it, what are my chances?'

Craig asked.

As gently as he could, the consultant explained Craig would only have a year to live, but he'd no idea how quickly an organ would become available.

Instinctively, my hand went to my tummy. Lily was 2, and we had another on the way.

Would Craig be here to see his children grow up?

That night, we barely slept.

I clung to him, recalling all the plans we'd had...a big family,



I was heavily pregnant

holidays, growing old together.

'Now we don't know what the future holds,' I whispered.

In between hospital appointments, Craig carried on working. But with each week that passed, he was getting weaker.

Last Christmas?

All we could do was pray a liver was found. Every time the phone rang, we were on tenterhooks.

As my bump got bigger, I couldn't help but worry.

I was due in January 2013.

Christmas was getting closer, and I was terrified this could be our last one as a family.

I'd no idea whether Craig would even see our unborn child.

Then, when I was eight months pregnant, Craig rang me.

'They've found a liver,' he said. 'They want me in theatre in four

Without a transplant, Craig would only have a year to live