
**Abstract**

In many cases, optimal treatment for end stage renal disease (ESRD) is living kidney donation. African Americans are of interest because of high incidence of ESRD, documented disparities regarding kidney transplantation, and under-representation in living kidney donor research. An interpretive qualitative study was conducted among African Americans to improve understanding of living donation to genetically or emotionally related recipients. Two major themes emerged – context of living kidney donation and work of living kidney donors. Specially noted are the influence of spiritual and religious practices, and experiences of participants with history of substance abuse. Research recommendations and clinical implications are presented.