

Kidney transplant *CHICAGO TRIBUNE 12-15-82*

\$70,000: The price tag on the life of one man

By Ena Naunton

M IAMI—What price life? For Daniel Ramirez, a man without kidneys, the price is \$70,000.

Because he doesn't have the money, Ramirez, a citizen of Argentina, has been taken off Jackson Memorial Hospital's waiting list for a kidney transplant.

He also has been told by Argentine officials that, having spent \$80,000 of their government's funds on surgery and intensive care in the United States, including an unsuccessful transplant in Washington, D.C., 18 months ago, he can't have any more money.

Lawyers for Jackson Hospital say Ramirez must pay a \$40,244 bill already owed and come up with another \$30,000 to cover the cost of a new transplant to get back on the waiting list.

IT IS, EXPLAINED Leon Zucker, Jackson's vice president of finance, simply a matter of a policy that limits the amount the county hospital can do for someone who doesn't live in the county.

"What is the responsibility of the Dade County taxpayer for people who live outside the county?" Zucker asked. "We recognize we are talking about human beings and life and death, but where do we draw the line on being nice people?"

The growing numbers of out-of-county patients, plus the burden of caring for thousands of Haitian and Cuban refugees, has caused Jackson to take a firmer stand recently in allowing only emergency treatment for those who cannot pay and whose own local or state governments will not pay.

Ramirez, whose overdue bill at

Jackson was all the result of emergency and intensive care treatment, has become one of the victims of that firm stand.

A LITTLE MORE than two years ago, Ramirez was a carefree student of civil engineering at the Universidad Rosario in Argentina.

"I had no problems. I was in perfect health," he said. "I had seen a doctor only a few times in my life."

Then, in August, 1980, he began

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to have "terrible feelings" in his head and nausea. He also was having trouble with fluid retention.

Tests showed he had acute nephritis [inflammation of the kidneys]. Within a month, Ramirez said, his kidneys ceased functioning and he needed dialysis—the artificial cleansing of the blood necessary for a person unable to pass body wastes in urine. The four-hour treatments were given three times a week.

"They told me at once that I needed a kidney transplant," he said.

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The situation here is rather self-explanatory I think. From the standpoint of Christian Love, what should be your position and what actions should you take if you are Daniel Ramirez? If you are members of Daniel Ramirez's family? If you are members of Daniel Ramirez's church? If you are Leon Zucker, Vice President of Finance of Jackson Memorial Hospital? If you are a Dade County taxpayer? If you are an official of the Argentine government? If you are a citizen and taxpayer of Argentina? Should the recent war in the Falklands have any bearing on this case? Why or why not? What other seemingly unrelated factors might have significant impact on this situation? What do you think?