



Short Communication

Organ Donation Promotion in India: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: Donating human cells, tissues or organs intended for human applications. The donating other organs such as liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, etc can be life saving because life is not possible without proper functioning of these organs. The expert opinion is that organ donation from one individual can save the life of up to 50 people. Many people donate an organ upon their death or when they are brain dead.

Key Words: Organ Donation, brain death & organs

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Organ Donation: Donating human cells, tissues or organs intended for human applications. There are only few acts in life that are more noble than donating our organs after the death. Donating eyes after we are gone from this world is the closest that we can come to giving life to another individual. Eye donation is wonderful legacy we can leave behind. Your eyes would continue to see the wonders of the world. Eye donation can give precious sight to two individuals. Instead of getting charred or returning to the dust after death, the eyes can breathe life into others. Similarly donating other organs such as liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, etc can be life saving because life is not possible without proper functioning of these organs. Donating these organs after the brain-death to needy-ones is equal to

'Donating a Life' to someone to whom you even do not know.

Importance of Organ Donation: Healthy organ or even tissues are taken from a donor, to be transplanted in the body of a needy individual. The expert opinion is that organ donation from one individual can save the life of up to 50 people. ⁽¹⁾ Organs which can be donated include: kidneys, heart, liver, pancreas, intestines, lungs, skin, bone and bone marrow, cornea, etc.

Government Initiative over Organ Donation: The Government of India passed the Transplantation of Human Organs Act in 1994 that legalized the concept of brain death and, for the first time, facilitated organ procurement from heart beating, brain dead donors. ⁽²⁾ The Transplantation of Human Organs Act (1994) provides for the regulation of removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for

therapeutic purposes, to prevent commercial dealings in human organs and accept brain death and make it possible to use these patients as potential organs donors. ⁽³⁾

Eligibility of Organ Donation: Most people can be organ donors. Many people donate an organ upon their death or when they are brain dead. These people are called 'deceased organ donors'. But a person can donate certain organs while he or she is still living. These people are called 'living organ donors'. Organs can be taken from the body of deceased person if prior consent given by family member. Also a healthy individual can donate organ or a part of it, when the individually willfully wishes to do that. There is no age limit for organ donation. Another issue of vital importance is the medical history of the individual that is if the individual has any history of chronic infectious disease, also if the individual should not have any detrimental effect on his health. If a patient has a normal functioning organ and is in good health, then organ donation is certainly an option. Young people as well as elderly individuals have donated organs, and all the time they have a willful consent for the action.

Complexity about Organ Donation: Here again the vital issue which complicates the situation is the lack of awareness among people. Even in the better performing regions of the country the deceased or cadaver renal transplantation rate is only 0.08 per million per year. ⁽⁴⁾ In Spain and Portugal the deceased donor rate is more than 30 donors per million populations. ⁽⁵⁾ Lack of organ donation awareness in India is another major barrier for deceased donation. After a much publicized organ donation by the doctor couple of their brain dead son, the organ donation rates in Tamil Nadu had increased exponentially. Without awareness it is going to be difficult to convince the relatives of the deceased patients to donate the organs for transplantation. Contrary to

logical understanding, educational status, socio-economic status, language barrier, cultural and religious factors do not affect the decision for or against donation. ⁽⁶⁾

Fact about Organ Donation: Organ Transplantation is a boon to medical industry as it has helped in saving the lives of those who would have died otherwise. There is a great need for human organs for transplantation. In fact, the need far exceeds the supply of transplantable organs. The lack of awareness and apathy of governmental organization to mobilize the masses have led to a poor scenario. India lags behind in the implementation of a cadaveric donation programme. Annually, while over 100,000 Indians suffer from End Stage Renal Disease, only a mere 3,000 are recipients of a donor kidney, of which only a small percentage are cadaver organs. In fact, the total number of patients, who have received cadaver kidneys in India from 1995 to 2003 only 524, an abysmally small figure. So, the major hurdle in transplant surgery currently is the critical shortage of vital transplant organs. ⁽⁷⁾ In India, 1, 33,938 people have died of road traffic accidents in 2010 and of that 70% are brain dead. ⁽⁸⁾ As far as the awareness of people regarding donation of vital organs is concerned it is very low. Donating organs is a great deed as donating life to other. But the lack of awareness among the people and lack of enriching efforts have made the situation even worse. It is estimated that in India every year over 175,000 people are diagnosed to have kidney failure and would require organ transplant. Due to non-availability of organs only about 5,500 kidney transplants are done. In India, less than 0.1% of the population participates in cadaver donation. ⁽⁹⁾ The same thing happens for eye and other organ donations as well. Still, the demand of organ transplant and the availability of organs are difficult to be matched. ⁽¹⁰⁾ But now the question is whether the scenario can

be improved and what is the sensitivity of people regarding this issue?

CONCLUSION

Without awareness it is going to be difficult to convince the relatives of the deceased patients to donate the organs for transplantation. Contrary to logical understanding, educational status, socio-economic status, language barrier, cultural and religious factors do not affect the decision for or against donation.

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