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ORGAN DONATION- AN EVOLVING SAGA

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ABSTRACT

Humanity is often faced with challenges such as disease, natural disasters and war that cause us pain and suffering. While it is impossible to evade these harsh realities of human life, we can try alleviate some of the suffering through various efforts. Organ donation is one of such endeavour. The organ donation registry tables across the different states of United States of America is cited here as an example whose main purpose is to invite people from all walks of life to literally give a piece of themselves to others. Considering the deficit of organs for transplantation in hospitals, this is indeed a very noble gesture. This is one of the initiatives that should be included in every corner around the world. This is because the value of human life should be protected and maintained and this is one way to ensure that a life is saved and collectively it will be salvation of humanity as a race. It seems as the years pass by the importance of donating or pledging to donate organs has not decreased rather the need has increased and outreach is an essential component of education for “Gift of Life” which needs to be reinforced time and over again.

KEYWORDS

Dilemma, Notion, Recipients, Transplantation and Organs.

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INTRODUCTON

Evolution of the concept of organ donation

Most people see dilemma when handling matters concerning organ donation and transplantation. In real sense, this issue can and still sounds difficult if we don't try to be realistic. Depending on our different cultural beliefs, many people oppose the idea of organ donation. However, some view organ donation as a heroic decision and socially acceptable activity based on the notion of helping to save life. Such positive notions and believes about organ donation must be advanced to increase the number of those signing up for organ donation

program in different states of America. The government has tried its best to help and boost organ donation through a number of initiatives, and people would be helpful if they considered the importance of organ donation and responded positively. In United States, people willing to donate organ can now freely do so by starting to give their names to the Organ Donor Registry¹.

Considering the huge number of people in need of different body organs today and the many that are dying each day due to organ problems, a socially upright member of our society should not consider it a big issue to donate an organ to a recipient who is in danger of dying. This is considered as a lifesaving process that everyone should also pay heed to. Data is alarming on the number of organ recipients. According to the UNOS-United Network for Organs Sharing-research, in every 16 minutes, a new name is added to the nation transplant waiting list. The same source indicated that there were about 53,000 patients waiting for transplantation by the year 1998. A huge number of Americans totalling to 55,000 are awaiting organs recipient. In 1996 almost 1000 people died waiting liver transplantation in America and more than 9,800 are waiting it currently. This means that without having good hearted people willing to donate organs to the needing recipient there is a danger of losing many people each year as a result of organic problems².

Currently, the whole world is in dire need of volunteers who wish to save life by rendering their organs for donation. It's actually important and very necessary to do anything to make sure that you help to have somebody survive death. According to our different religious backgrounds, we are taught the importance of life and that's why it is important to help those in need of different organ problems, by rendering our parts to help them live. It is time people did away with the negative notions and questions posited against organ donating, and possibly consider it in a different perspective-such as if they were the recipient³.

When handling such issues like organ donation, many questions may arise in our mind, such as what would happen to our tender bodies after some of our organs are taken out? It's actually a shock to many, but if we look into our society, many people who have donated organs are there and breathing well. It

is amazing that someone may think twice while donating an organ yet the same person would not do so to receive one. In my opinion, we all should sometimes be at a position of doing what we would like others to do for ourselves.

This is an important initiative that would make our society to grow. It's always good to help those in need than to need help. That does not mean that we should not care while donating our organs. We are still responsible and fully accountable for our lives. After all, nobody has an extra organ and therefore the issue must be viewed at the perspective of donor's sacrifice. Therefore, there are different things that we should consider before donating our organs to recipients. Such include our current health status and the status after donation. By doing so, we are at a better position of examining it, and coming up with a clear decision on whether to give or not. For example, there would be no need for a medically fit person to donate a body organ to save life and after some few days die. Also the state of mind as far as the donation is concerned. Is your mind ready to help by donating? Brain is the controller of everything in the human body and so it might happen that without the consent of brain, some things as crucial as surgical operations that are a must during transplantation would bring out issues. But what could save a great deal is the changing of our attitudes to accommodate organ donation in our lives^{2,4}.

The final decision to donate an organ may be influenced by a wide range of factors. It is a good idea to consult medical experts before engaging yourself in organ donation for medical advice. Doctors may advise you to go ahead and donate, or drop your idea if at all your body is not at a position of donating. They may also advise on the type of meals that a donor of an organ should feed on to avoid future injuries in the body. Sharing ideas of your intention to donate with friends and relatives is another important issue. Members of the family willing to donate an organ or at a position to must be spoken to before the donation⁴ and if a positive word is given, this person may give in. By doing so one is at a position of hearing their views as far as this matter is concerned. Having known scientific facts that an organ of a person about to die with an early harvesting and proper preservation can be

transplanted to a recipient. Informed decisions are important, but process can be initiated only with the owner's prior consent or with approval from relatives. Saving a life is good than to lose two. And if one is in any way going to die in few hours, it is necessary to use that chance to ensure that another life is saved.

ORGAN DONATION SCENARIO IN INDIA

Organ donation programs are at a very primordial stage in India. India is a large country with a diverse population spread across 28 states and 8 United Territories (UT) ⁵. With a land area of 3,287,263 square kilometres, India is the seventh largest country in the world and with 17.8% of the world's population, India is the second largest populous country in the world after China^{6,7}.

It is high time for the policy makers and other stake holders of a global giant like India to understand the magnitude of the benefits from these programs. Making tangible policies that are reflected nationally, emphasizing attention to both the organ donors and recipients, is the need of the hour.

A law known as the Human Organ Transplant Act (THO) was passed in India in 1994 to streamline organ donation and transplant activities. Despite the THO legislation, organ trafficking is regularly reported in the Indian media and has been widely criticized by international organizations. The ethics of organ donation has important implications for society as it provides a basis for resolving many conflicts in emerging regenerative sciences such as cloning, tissue engineering and stem cells⁸.

There may be religiously based issues that can affect organ donation, but by and large all religions support organ donation. There is extensive literature on various religions and their impact on organ donation and transplantation in India. India is known for its diversity of religious beliefs and practices. According to the latest census figures (2011), India's population is 79.8% Hindus, 14.2% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.72% Sikhs, 0.7% Buddhists and 0.3% Jains, the rest belong to other religions³. The guiding principle of saving another life is appropriate in most religions. Some religions distinguish between live and deceased donors. Data on organ refusal for religious reasons are not readily available⁹.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) launched the first Indian Organ Donation Day on 27 November 2010 in New Delh¹⁰. Since then, 27 November every year is celebrated as Organ Donation Day in India to raise awareness and encourage people to donate their organs after death¹¹. Organ Donation Day is celebrated nationally by the transplant organizations to honour the donor families, commemorate donors, and encourage people to pledge to donate and register as donors.

ORGAN DONATION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

SARS-CoV-2 is responsible for the ongoing respiratory disease pandemic known as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)¹². The risk of developing COVID-19 from an organ donor infected with SARS-CoV-2 is unknown. Therefore, great care should be taken when considering transplantation. Transmission is influenced by epidemiological risk factors, incubation period, degree of viremia and survival of SARS-CoV-2 in the blood and organ compartments. Recent guidance from the National Health Service Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), United Kingdom¹³ recommends that all potential donors be tested for her SARS-CoV-2 and that those who test positive suspend donations. Donations to asymptomatic individuals who have been in areas affected by COVID-19 in the past 28 days are not recommended. Asymptomatic individuals being monitored after contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case are excluded from donations. Finally, individuals being screened for COVID-19 who are not SARS-CoV-2 negative are excluded for as long as they remained positive.

In India organ donation and transplantation during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge that the program has never faced in the years since its inception. During the first three months, there was little transplant activity in the country. Most of the cities with the most transplants were in the Red Zone, with only Kerala, which was less affected, being able to donate some of the dead, followed by Pune and Hyderabad. The data from April to June 2020 revealed the following data.

In Kerala, 6 donors died resulting in 6 pairs of corneas, 11 kidney transplants, 4 liver transplants

and 2 heart transplants. Pune had 5 deceased donors and 4 kidney transplants, 5 Liver Transplants and 2 Kidney Pancreatic Transplants. Five donors died in Hyderabad, providing 4 pairs of corneas, 6 kidney transplants and 4 liver transplants¹⁴.

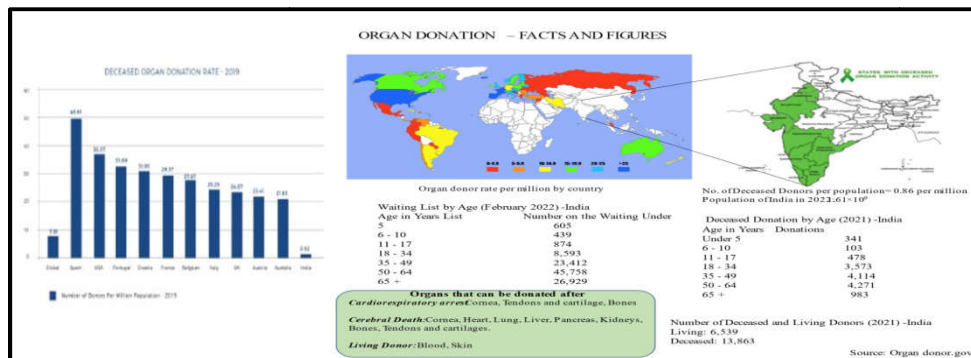
The Organ Transplantation Society of India has issued two guidelines during the pandemic and the second update has been approved as a national guideline by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO). Almost every state's tertiary care hospitals are treating the COVID patients, and considering risk-benefit ratios and decision-making processes about organ procurement. Therefore, the transplant programs are likely to remain discontinued at these hospitals until the pandemic shows signs of receding. Health care worker safety issues and the risk of transmitting COVID-19 from patients to potential recipients and donors should also be considered¹⁴.

The global mass refusal of organ donations due to uncertainty about the transmission of COVID-19 was increasing mortality among vulnerable patients.

In the challenging context of the pandemic surge, individualized decision-making was required to save lives and continue socially accepted transplantation practices¹⁵.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

It is a good thing for people to know the importance of organ donation as a way of saving lives. Organ donation is the most valuable gift that one can receive today. Everyone should put this into consideration. It's a socially upright thing to think of becoming an organ donor, since nobody knows if one may estate from being an organ donor today and tomorrow becomes an organ recipient. To those that have in one way or the other received or given their body organs, they portray a good heroic example of human acts since, for example, one organ from one person can save up to 50 people⁴. This can lead to saving many lives that would otherwise have been lost.



Graphical Abstract: Organ Donation- Facts and Figures in India in comparison to the Global scenario

CONCLUSION

A positive attitude towards organ donation would assist the many people in need, and would be a heroic move. A call upon people to save life today by signing for organ donation registry by itself is not enough. A call to everyone to join hands in promoting “anatomical donation” and campaigning to mobilize the mass on the importance of it, is an extended hand to this formidable act. Furthermore, disasters can only be eliminated by nothing lesser than rendering our bodies for this cause.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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