

## Review Article

**Organ Donation – Understanding Organ Donation Through the Eyes of a Nurse**

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In today's modern medicine, organ donation is one of the distinctive developments. Organ donation or transplantation is the process of removing an organ or tissue surgically from one individual named organ donor to another individual named the recipient. Nurses perform various roles in the organ and tissue donation field. Nurses are at the forefront of the donation process where anyone, regardless of medical history or age, can sign up to be a donor. They are the support system that can positively influence the patients and family view of organ donation.

Organ transplantation, over the last decade, has been transformed into a realistic achievement of contemporary medicine. Organ transplantation is more critical than many of us realize and provides thousands of individuals with a renewed life and improved health every year. For those individuals that are at the end of the line for hope, organ donation provides a life-giving and life-enhancing opportunity.

**Organ Donation Statistics**

According to the American Transplant Foundation [1]. In the United States, approximately 20 people die every day from unavailable organs for transplant, and 700,000 transplants were completed in the United States since 1988. In 2018, 71% of the Organ Procurement Organizations (OPO) saw an increase in donations because of the transformations and constant improvement of the country's organ procurement companies that are accountable for helping people to realize the importance of organ donation [6]. One deceased donor can save up to eight lives through organ transplantation, and anyone can be a donor. Donation does not cost any money for the donor's families. Organ transplantation is a very time-sensitive process managed by many clinicians where the organ must be processed within a given time frame. The allocation of organs is diverse for each organ because of its different complexities. The Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network revealed that approximately 11,900 individuals provided the lifesaving gift of organ donation after their death, which made 2019 the ninth consecutive record-breaking year for organ donation in the United States. The preliminary data from the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network shows that out of 11,870 deceased donor total constitute an increase of 10.7% over 2018 [3].

**Affected Families**

Donation affects families and friends who support individuals in need of transplantation. The family attitudes express the need for transforming the gift of the organ in contrast to their sorrow over the death of a loved

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one. Making a positive contribution is an attempt to deal with the negative experience of death and create a meaningful contribution. According to the U.S Government Information on Organ Donation and Transplantation (2019), there are 113000 people on the national transplant waiting list as of July 2019, where twenty people die each year waiting for a transplant.

It is a common belief that families understand the end of life process that is important to successful organ donation, and by accepting this process, the family's behaviors will exhibit a more positive attitude toward donation. Families and grieving individuals who are empathetic towards their death of loved ones are less likely to have prolonged grief. Some family members that lost their child felt somehow relieved and comfortable with the idea that their decision of donation could prevent another family from experiencing the devastating loss of losing their loved one, especially when they are a child [5].

There is always the possibility that organs or tissues will not be recovered or transplanted, that they may be rejected after transplant, or that the recipient will die despite the transplant. The psychological and emotional impact on families who have authorized donations is greatly affected by the whole process, starting with participation in donation discussions and complicated decision-making clinical steps. The article written by Dicks, Northam, MP van Haren and Boer [2]. Described that researchers have found that families who consented with the process want to pay tribute to wishes of the deceased and exhibit compassion. A positive outcome and a sense of peace can result in knowing that their loved one can contribute to the lives of others.

**Impact on the Recipients**

It is essential to recognize the impact on the receiving recipients. The recipients with organ failure are adjusting to emotional and social changes and experiencing anxiety and stress. These recipients are often suffering a loss of social roles and autonomy while dealing with limited life expectancy. Most potential recipients consider the benefits and risks of transplantation when deciding to enroll on a transplant waiting list. The most significant advantage associated with the transplant is quality of life where the recipients can return to normal activities allowing them to spend more time with their families, pursue their desired interests, and be more physically active. Some transplantation and donation organizations provide recipients with non-identifiable information about the donor. Some authors reveal that many recipients wanted to know more about the donor and would consider contacting their families to express their gratitude

and let them know of the post-transplant progress [2]. There are many donation organizations in the country, including Donor Network West in California, Donor Alliance in Colorado, and many others that can save lives through organ donation and transplantation. These organizations are vital to potential organ recipients, and they are the heart and soul to inspire communities of the importance of organ and tissue donation.

### Nurses Involvement

Many transplant patients that are receiving or donating an organ are not fully aware of the lifelong implications of the procedure. The best way for nurses to help patients and families to make their decisions is to provide them with the education necessary to understand the transplantation procedure, and the risks and benefits involved in the process. It is the moral accountability of the acute and critical nurses, during end-of-life discussions, to communicate with grieving relatives and, to work with a specialist nurse for organ donation to approach the subject of organ donation in an appropriately timed manner. This can be a challenging process for nurses to make this approach and fulfill the care needs of the bereaved family and the potential donor where it requires compassion, empathy, and professional expertise. Nurses are pivotal in maintaining the patient's autonomy over their life by advocating for them. Nurses should completely comprehend the patient's wishes and intend to add meaning to their death if they choose to donate their organs.

It is imperative that the nurse can provide a private area for the family to discuss options and concerns as the process begins. Nurses are often the coordinator for the procurement process by obtaining consent, supporting the family, identifying the potential organ donor, and successful retrieval of the organ. As a support system, the nurse can influence the patient and family's view of organ donation by sharing positive stories from other transplant recipients [7].

### Organ and Tissue Transplant Procurement and Suitability

One of the nurse's significant roles is to maintain the patients in a way that allows for the retrievability of viable organs until the organ is safely transferred to the transplant organization. In this process, the nurse is working with an organ procurement team to securely store and process the organ [4]. The organ procurement organization and the tissue banks are involved in the evaluation process, along with the nurses. As part of the organ evaluation, the patient's medical history, circumstances of death, and physical examination are reviewed, along with laboratory tests or any other tests performed. The screening is performed to determine if there is any medical history that would make the organ not suitable for donation. The patient safety operations specialists are nurses that are working for the tissue services at a pharmaceutical company where the company prepares the soft tissue material for surgeries ranging from complex hernia repair to breast reconstruction. The nurses are involved in the evaluation of the donor eligibility by examining the donor's medical records, labs, and physical assessments of the donors from multiple tissue banks throughout the country.

Tissue donation can include skin, heart valves, musculoskeletal tissue, ligaments, and tendons, and they can be recovered within 24 hours of death and be processed and stored for later usage. The author mentioned that the tissue services company could separate skin samples so that the outer epidermal layer is used for grafts, and the inner layers are used as subdermal structures or for delicate filling [8]. The patient safety operations nurses are accountable for maintaining compliance with the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB), international and state regulations during the quality review of all donor files for tissue submitted to ensure the safety of the donated human tissue.

As part of the evaluation process, they are responsible for the triage and review of information received after initial donor release to assess the potential impact on donor suitability and distributed products, triggering

escalation procedures and evaluation for regulatory action. The data reviewed consists of donor consent, blood test results, physical assessment, autopsies, cultures, biopsies, donor risk assessment interviews, medical history, and recovery documentation. They are analyzing this information by utilizing clinical knowledge of acute and critical events to identify missing or ambiguous donor information to facilitate a comprehensive review of the donor suitability. For example; if the information in the donor risk interview states that the patient has shingles and the family does not know if the shingles are active or not, then the nurse must assess the medical records to identify if the donor was treated for shingles at the time of death or if in the physical assessment shows any rashes on the skin. If the patient had shingles and the donor was treated for it, then the tissue will be rejected. The nurses are reviewing many quality donor files where they are crucial in utilizing critical thinking and knowledge in making this process efficient for determining the donor's suitability.

### Conclusion

Nurses play a vital role in taking care of the patient or the family when impacted by a tragedy. As a support system, nurses are the vanguards in influencing the public's view of organ donation, through sharing the positive outcomes they see in transplant recipients. Nurses must be aware of the moral challenges inherent in the care of transplant patients and their families. Nurses are seen as an essential link in organ procurement and play a crucial role in addressing the organ shortage by identifying potential donors and supporting families through the process. Incorporating education and training could help to improve nurses' capacity to understand or participate in the organ donor process.

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