



SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION IN EUROPE

Organ transplantation (OT) is vital for the treatment and quality of life of patients of all ages, including children, living with a wide variety of conditions. In many cases, OT is the only treatment option remaining and a matter of life and death.

- OT benefits about 28.000 patients in the European Union yearly (1);
- The availability of organs does not meet the (growing) demand (1);
- According to Council of Europe data, by the end of 2014 more than 70.000 patients were waiting for a kidney, liver, heart, lung, pancreas or intestinal transplant in the EU (2);
- Each day, on average, 12 people died while waiting for a transplant (2).

The problems related to the availability of organs are highly complex and sensitive: they do not depend on any one single factor but result from a combination of these, such as:

- Type of legislation and consent systems in place in the country;
- Organisation and performance of national transplant programmes and teams;
- Capacity of national transplant teams and hospital staff to engage potential donors;
- Awareness and understanding of the issues in the general population; health literacy;
- Ethical concerns;
- Cultural and religious beliefs;
- Emotional issues: most often the decision to donate organs comes at a tragic moment for family members, when they are confronted with the news of their loved one's passing.
- Family refusal rates: these vary greatly across Europe but are quite high in some countries, eg UK and France, it is around 40% (3) (4).

Patients from many European countries face the sad reality that there are no OT centres or programmes available locally (5). Some EU countries have collaboration agreements with neighbouring countries and this has made it possible for some patients to have access to surgery which otherwise would not have been possible. These agreements could serve as examples of good practices to share.

Given the above, there is therefore no easy or ready solution and the problem has to be addressed from many different angles. This is why only a mobilisation of as many of all the players concerned is needed to effectuate concrete change.

Sources:

(1) ACCORD (*Achieving comprehensive coordination in organ donation*) background paper online at <http://www.accord-ja.eu/background>

(2) Council of Europe Background & Mission on Organ, Tissue and Cell Transplantation online at <https://www.edqm.eu/en/organ-transplantation-mission-67.html>

(3) Taking organ donation to 2020, a detailed strategy, NHS UK http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/to2020/resources/nhsbt_organ_donor_strategy_long.pdf page 6.

(4) Newsletter Transplant 2014 <http://www.transplant-observatory.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/newsletter2014.pdf> table page 48.

(5) Newsletter Transplant 2014 <http://www.transplant-observatory.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/newsletter2014.pdf> table page 10.