

INDIAN JOURNAL OF MEDICAL ETHICS

JOURNAL OF THE FORUM FOR MEDICAL ETHICS SOCIETY SINCE 1993

ONLINE ISSN: 0975-5691 | PRINT ISSN: 0974-8466

Organ donation: awareness a must

This is with reference to a news item in the November 11, 2013 issue of *The Times of India*, "Organ Donation pledge on I-Cards". According to the newspaper report, the move to encourage organ donation has been initiated by the state public health minister, Suresh Shetty. Mumbai University has issued a circular requesting all colleges to print stickers of the organ donation pledge and to distribute them among the students.

Organ donation is a voluntary act. An individual can decide to donate his/her organs by declaring his/her intent to do so while alive, or the family can take such a decision after the death of a relative. An extensive campaign is required to promote a proper understanding of the organ donation pledge and to assist people in making an informed decision on this important issue. No such awareness campaign has taken place in the colleges of Mumbai University, to the best of our knowledge.

We are aware that there is a severe shortage of organs for "cadaveric transplant" programmes in major hospitals. Sustained campaigns abroad have made it possible for organ donation pledges to appear on driving licences. However, I feel that there is a need for a vigorous debate on the subject among students, medical professionals, and the public at large, before initiating such a campaign. In the absence of such background work, the decision to promote organ donation is unfortunate and there is a need to intervene at the earliest to stop colleges from issuing stickers of the organ donation pledge.

At the same time, a campaign to promote safe driving, both among those who drive two-wheelers and four-wheelers, may serve to save some young lives.

Ratna Magotra, Consulting cardiac surgeon and former Head, Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, KEM Hospital, Parel, Mumbai 400 012 INDIA