TITLE- Organ Donation: Just Another Facet of Human Solidarity

AUTHORS NAMES-

(1) Archit Garg,

Final Year MBBS Student

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Sadiq Road,

Faridkot, Punjab, 151203

Telephone No- 8699333361

Email- architgarg0406@gmail.com

(2) Aashi Garg

Final Year MBBS Student

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Sadiq Road,

Faridkot, Punjab, 151203

Telephone No- 8699151490

Email- aashigarg0406@gmail.com

FUNDING- None

**Organ Donation: Just Another Facet of Human Solidarity**

**ABSTRACT**-

This article examines the scenario of organ donation in India including the challenges it faces and what can be done to overcome the same. At present there is a considerable difference in the number of donors and those in need of organ transplantation. The articles begins with impediments organ donation faces in our country like cultural factors and superstitions, lack of awareness, lack of organ donation and retrieval centres to name a few. Then it goes on to offer some suggestions to improve organ donation in India both in terms of the volunteers and also organ donation as an organisation. Every year around 5 lakh Indians die due to lack of organs available for transplantation. Organ Donation empowers people to save lives and is their Route to Immortality.

**MAIN ARTICLE**-

Don’t think of organ donations as giving up a part of you to keep a total stranger alive,

It’s really a total stranger giving up almost all of them to keep a part of you alive...

Organ transplantation is one of the best medical procedures to have ever been developed. It not only helps in saving the lives of the moribund patients but also it is a symbol of human solidarity. For the purpose of transplantation organ donation is imperative.

There is a huge disparity in the number of organ donors and the people in need of organ transplantation. Organ donation has saved lives of hundreds and thousands of people but the people actually in need span in millions. India’s organ donation rate is one of lowest in the world. The organ donation rate in India is 0.26 per million populations as compared to that of USA of 26 per million populations. (1) The requirement of organs such as cornea, liver, heart, kidney is much more in contrast to the available donors. This dearth of donors continues despite the socioeconomic and cultural development in India.

The lack of organ donation can be attributed to several factors which need to be addressed. This article attempts to explain the various challenges that hamper organ donation and the strategies that can be used to encourage organ donation in our country.

**CHALLENGES**-

CULTURAL FACTORS AND SUPERSTITIONS-

One of the major hindrances in organ donation process is cultural and religious values of people. We live in a society where everyone has their own set of culture and traditions. It is very difficult to even start a talk of organ donation among them. Superstitions such as being born with a missing organ if someone had donated it and taking organs from the deceased will affect the natural cycle of birth-death-rebirth are still prevalent.(2)

LEVEL OF EDUCATION-

Level of education comes into play in almost every situation. It is also easy to convince them about donating the organs of their deceased family members in the hospital. (3) Also they understand the brain dead condition of the patient better and give consent for organ donation.

LACK OF ORGAN TRANSPLANT AND RETRIEVAL CENTRES-

The number of organ transplant and retrieval centres is limited in India. Up until December 2017, there were only 301 hospitals which were carrying out this process and out of it only 250 were registered with NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE TRANSPLANT ORGANISATION (NOTTO).

Moreover even in these hospitals there is lack of adequate number of transplant coordinators whose main function is to counsel the families for giving consent for organ donation and coordinate the process of donation and transplantation.

LACK OF AWARENESS-

Lack of general awareness about organ donation, the procedure of organ donation adds to the problem and makes organ donation a tedious task. Many people don't even know that they can volunteer for their organs to be donated after their death just by simply filling a form. People need to be sensitized regarding the process of organ donation; they need to be made aware of the discrepancy between the organ donors and those requiring organ transplantation and suffering of the patients only then they will actively participate.

BRAIN DEATH DECLARATION-

This continues to be major handicap in the process of organ donation and transplantation. There is lack of standardized definition of brain death. (4) Many a time doctors and nurses fail to identify this condition and continue to keep the patient on ventilator. Moreover the public isn't fully aware of this condition and thus resent the doctor's advice to give consent for donation and in fact persuade them to keep the patient on ventilators.

OTHER FACTORS-

According to a study, modifiable factors like the sex and race of organ donation procurement(ODP) representatives, the individual initiating discussion with family(nurse or doctor vs. ODP representative), length of donation discussion with family, and time of day of the conversation with family all influenced the organ donation rates.(5) Consent rates were higher when the ODP representative was a female and of the same race as the family, approach made by ODP representative, longer discussion with family. The rates were lower during evening hours as compared to daytime.

**STRATIGIES OR METHODS TO IMPROVE ORGAN DONATION-**

INFRASTRUCTURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT-

(a)More organ transplant and retrieval centres should be established which will help in carrying out the process safely throughout the country. These centres should have highly skilled doctors to carry out the transplantation process cautiously.

(b) Every hospital should also have an organ donation procurement representative who can explain the process to the family members of the patient and ensure the process of transplantation is carried out safely and successfully. These ODP representatives should have adequate knowledge about medicine and organ transplantation only then the process will be carried out smoothly. They should have good communicating skills. These representatives should also be periodically trained in these skills and any new advancement techniques in the donation process.

(c)Tissue banks should also be set up, at least one in every state which will help in preserving the organs in a safe and sterilised manner to be used later.

(d)All the organ transplantation centres should be registered under NOTTO which will help in having a single record of organ donations and transplantations throughout the country and thus help in maintain transparency and also compiling data for statistical purposes.

AWARENESS AMONG GENERAL PUBLIC-

Awareness has and will continue to have paramount importance in increasing the number of donors. The general public should be sensitized about the suffering of the patients and how their small initiative of organ donation after their death could help in improving lives of many people.

Awareness can be spread via several mediums. It can be through posters, flyers, play at public places, ads on TV, short films or ads before screening of films in theatres, social media etc. People should be made aware of how simple the process of organ donation is. All they have to do is fill the form for organ donation which will then enable the concerned organization to take their organs after their death. These organ donation forms should be made available at public places where people come routinely like banks, government schools, railway stations etc. The staff at these places should be trained in providing the information to the public about the whole process of organ donation and also clarify any doubts they might have regarding the same.

The organ donation process must also be linked up with the AADHAAR CARD which would help in easy identification of donors.

GOVERNMENTAL AIDS-

All the organ donors should be given incentives in the form of free health checkups at government hospitals, concession in tax paying, special health insurance schemes. Special mementos may be given to them for their help towards the betterment of the society and improving lives of other people which might motivate others to do the same. The family members of the patient who give consent for organ donation may be given financial aid for hospitalization, medication at the time illness and for cremation of the patient when he dies.

PROPER MEDICAL GUIDELINES-

The criteria of defining brain death should be universalised in all the hospitals. Declaring brain death ought to be made mandatory in all the hospitals and that to at correct time so as to prevent any organ damage.

Provisions and protocols related to organ donation after circulatory death need to be made and guidelines to withdraw the life support must be mentioned clearly.

Opt out organ donation policy in which organ donation will occur unless special request is made before the death of the person against the same. Opt out organ donation policy is followed in countries like Austria, Spain and Belgium where organ donation occurs by default unless the person specifically opts out.(6) Researches show these countries have a high organ donation rate because in many cases people want to donate organs but are not registered. This Opt Out Policy bypasses this process and helps in increasing the rates of organ donation. Implementing this opt out policy will boost organ donation.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY MEMBERS-

Family members should be precisely told the condition of the patient such as brain death preferably by the ODP representative and that to in their own language. They must then be counselled about organ donation properly. The representative should talk in a sympathetic manner. Another cardinal thing is that the family is counselled as a whole

PROPER MANEGEMENT OF DONATED ORGANS-

The donated organs ought to be healthy for amelioration of the success rate of organ transplantation. In order to ensure this donor management is imperative. In between the period of brain death and organ procurement organs need timely monitoring to ensure post graft survival. (7)Some of the many conditions which challenge donor management are hemodynamic instability, coagulopathy, hypothermia and electrolyte abnormalities. Since the nurses are the closest contact to the patient, they should be properly trained to avoid, identify and timely treat the aforementioned conditions.

**CONCLUSION**-

Organ donation continues to be a field requiring strenuous efforts to achieve success. Organ donation rates persist to be low in our country probably due to socioeconomic and cultural factors, lack of awareness and the lack of adequate facilities to carry out the process. To facilitate peoples participation in this process spreading awareness amongst them, better organisation, infrastructural support, proper and timely communication with family members, and finally formulation and implementation of governmental policies pertaining to the same will be beneficial. All these efforts are of secondary importance. The primary initiative from the people themselves to help improve and save lives of others in need is of primal importance. Hence it requires coordination of the general public, concerned organisations and the government.

Opt out organ donation policy is also an effective alternative to increase the donation rates but it comes with its own political and legal issues.

Successful Organ Donation and Transplantation is still a long road ahead with many obstacles. But with continuous and relentless efforts and due diligence it is possible.

**References**-

(1) Organ india.org database, See <http://www.organindia.org/make-a-pledge/>

(2) Singh P, Kumar A, Sharma RK. Factors influencing refusal by relatives of brain-dead patients to give consent for organ donation: Experience at a transplant centre. J Indian MedAssoc 2004; 102:630, 632-43

(3) Donal McGlade, Barbara Pierscionek. Can education alter attitudes, behaviour and knowledge about organ donation? A present-post-test study. BMJ Open. 2013;3(12): e003961. 2013 Dec 24; doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2013-003961

(4) Sarah Wahlster, Eelco F.M. Wijidicks, Pratik V.Patel, David M.Greer, J.Claude Hemphill, Marco Carone, Farrah J.Mateen. Brain death declaration: Practices and perceptions worldwide. Neurology. 2015 May; 84(18): 1870-1879. doi: 10. 1212/WNL.0000000000001540

(5) Brown CV, Foulkrod KH, Dworaczyk S, ThompsonK, Elliot E, Cooper H, Coopwood B. Barriers to obtaining family consent for potential organ donors. J Trauma. 2010 Feb;68(2):445-51. doi: 10.1097/TA.0b013e3181caab8f

(6)IRODAT Database, See <http://www.irodat.org/img/database/pdf/NEWSLETTER2018_June.pdf>

(7) Susan L. Smith. Organ and Tissue Donation- Medscape- Mar 26, 2003