Paid Organ Donations?

BBSI
Jenni Dietrich, Scott Geyer, Jeffrey Kidd, David Sivakoff, Kristin Wheeler
With: Agnieszka Szarecka

There has been a significant increase in the number of people waiting for kidneys and livers over the past 10 years.

The number of kidney and liver transplants performed has not increased significantly to compensate for the demand.

On average, 15 people die each day while waiting for an organ.

Deaths on the Waiting List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ Type</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kidney</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancreas</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart-Lung</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6054</td>
<td>6455</td>
<td>6077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total Unique Patient Deaths
Just the Facts, Jack

- The selling of and compensation for organs is illegal in the US, as per the National Transplantation Act (1984)
- It is against international law, and is illegal in almost all countries

The Ethical Argument

- Organ donation has the general consensus of being an act based on altruistic motives
- Making human organs a commodity would exploit the poor
  - More donations would be an act of desperation for money
  - Suffering will be prolonged or ignored for those who can't afford to pay for the organ
- The rich and middle class would not sell an organ, but could most likely afford to buy one
- The focus of organ donations should not revolve around altruism, but rather around saving lives
- Compensation for those who choose to donate will increase the number of donors and can alleviate the poverty of some individuals.

The Ethical Argument

- Organs being treated as "things" can alter society's respect for the human body
- Selling human organs can be compared to other paid human body transactions such as slavery or prostitution
- Once an ethical barrier is removed, society rarely reverts back to previous state

The Ethical Argument

- The person can decide what they want to do with their own body
- Other markets that also classify as human body transactions such as blood, semen, human eggs, and surrogate wombs provide compensation. The number of donors increased.

The Ethical Argument

- The integrity of the medical profession would be questioned
  - Did the need for organs affect his/her diagnosis?
  - Will the economic status affect who’s plug is pulled?

The Ethical Argument

- Providing monetary rewards for the family members of deceased donors would increase the number of cadaver donors
Practical Constraints

- Problems mostly focus around the donor
  - Bottom line: the donor will suffer
  - Selling one’s body
    - Cannot sell one’s body into slavery or prostitution
    - Individual’s right to self determination
  - Living organ donation is life threatening and painful
  - Can anyone ever be informed enough?
    - Inherent denial of risk
    - Accepted in other dangerous professions, military service?

- Who will ultimately choose to donate?
  - Exploitation of the poor, less informed

- For compensating families of non living organ donors, does payment go to family or funeral home?
  - How much should be paid
    - A large enough amount to cover any expenses, or a smaller “thank you” payment
  - What if there are little or no funeral costs?

Practical Restraints

- Who gets and who pays for the organs?
  - Organ bank that is government subsidized
  - Free Market distribution

- International market
  - Poorer countries would likely have more willing donors

- Fear that the sale of organs would decrease altruistic donation

Who does this affect?

- Potential donors
  - Those who may be enticed to become living organ donors if compensated
  - Those who may choose to donate their organs upon their death if some compensation would be received

- The families of potential donors
  - May effect decision on donating organs of dead relatives
Who does this affect?

- Recipients
  - Those currently on organ waiting lists who would have the option/be required to pay donor
  - Those people not on the list (i.e. taken off the list because they are too sick) who might become able to purchase the needed organ

Who does this affect?

- Doctors and Hospitals
  - Responsible for carrying out harvesting and transplantation procedures
  - Role in encouraging families to donate organs
  - Question of removing individuals from life support
- Insurance Agencies or Government
  - May be required to “foot the bill”

What else can be done?

- Renew campaign to encourage families to donate the organs of deceased relatives and to encourage individuals to decide to become organ donors
  - "The Gift of Life"
  - Number of deceased donors has been fairly constant
- More education about the demand for organs and safe guards in the transplantation procedures

What else can be done?

- Sometimes an individual wishes to be an organ donor, but when a tragedy occurs a family member overrides that decision
  - Possibly set up a database or procedure to make family unable to overturn an individual's decision to donate
**What else can be done?**

- **Presumed Consent**
  - Instead of an individual declaring their desire to donate their organs, it is assumed that everyone consents to donate in the event of tragedy.
  - Those who do not wish to be an organ donor must “opt out” of the program by declaring such.
  - Switches the burden onto those who do not wish to be an organ donor.
  - May take advantage of those who are not informed about the issue but would choose not to donate.

**Possible Problems**

- **Reluctance to Donate**
  - Donation is counter to some people’s beliefs.
  - No argument or element of persuasion is likely to change some people’s minds.
  - Belief that immediate family should have a say in the handling of the remains (including organs) of deceased relatives.

- **Increase funding for research in alternative sources of organs**

- **Xenotransplantation**
  - The transfer of cells/tissues/organs from non-human sources into humans.
  - Concerns about genetic engineering of animals to fit human needs.
  - Transfer of animal diseases to human populations.

- **Artificial organs**
  - Advances in technology and micro-engineering may give an alternative to organ transplants.
  - Concerns about experiments which test out new devices on people.
What else can be done?

- Stem cell research/genetic techniques
  - May one day allow for the “growth” of new tissues/organisms
  - Well known ethical concerns about research using human embryos
  - Concerns about interfering with nature and having too much control over the design and growth of people
  - Uncertainty about the implications of cloning

Our Perspective

- Governments need to become more aware of black markets and cut out illegal organ sales
- Outright sale of organs from living people should remain illegal due to the concerns for the donor
- Some form of compensation for the families of dead donors may be acceptable

Our Perspectives

- Take steps to encourage organ donation but also fund other forms of research
- The idea of “presumed consent” is interesting and requires serious consideration
- Those who sign up to receive must be willing to donate

Sources