

## **ORGAN DONATION A GIFT OF LIFE**

Organ transplants are miraculous achievements of modern medicine which provide a viable approach to the management of diseases that cause end stage organ failure. They help such patients live long after they have given up hope but depend entirely on the generosity of donors and their families who are willing to give this life saving gift to others. Every year, hundreds of people die while waiting for an organ transplant. There is a serious shortage of organs and the gap between the numbers of organs donated and the number of people waiting is ever increasing. This where you can help by pledging your organs

A single non-living heart beating donor can save 7 lives by donating the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small bowel. Several tissues like cornea, heart valves, ear drums and bones, menisci, tendons and skin could be donated. The Transplantation of Human Organs Act 1994 (THOA) and the Transplantation of human organ rules 1995 (THOR) as amended in 2002 provide for the regulation of removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes the act recognizes the concept of Brain Stem Death (BSD) and gives legal sanction for cadaver organ donation. As of now there is no organization at the national level to control and coordinate organ donation and organ sharing there are some organizations at the state level like ORBO (Organ Retrieval & Banking Organization) at AIIMS; New Delhi MOHAN (Multi Organ Harvesting And Networking) foundation at Chennai and ZTCC ( Zonal Transplant Co Ordination Committee) for Maharashtra.

Below are some commonly asked questions about donation:

### **1. Who can donate?**

Any person regardless of age, race or gender can pledge to donate his or her organs by signing a donor card. If you are under 18 consent of parent or legal guardian is necessary. Alternatively, the family members of a brain dead person can offer the organs for donation. Medical suitability for donation is determined at the of brain death of the individual

### **2. What is brain death?**

Severe head injury, stroke, brain tumour or other damage serious illnesses cause irreversible brain damage with cessation of brain stem function and such a patient is termed brain dead. A brain dead person is medically and legally dead and cannot recover. With the help of artificial support like mechanical ventilation and drugs, the heart may continue to beat for a limited period of time but eventually it will stop functioning despite any medical support. Brain death is certified after specific tests are performed twice over an interval of six hours by a team of 4 doctors as per the guidelines issued by Govt. of India in Transplantation of Human Organs act 1994.

### **3. Does donation leave the body disfigured?**

No Organs are removed with greatest care and respect by a team of specially trained surgeons. This takes place in the operation under aseptic conditions. After the removal of the organs the surgical incision is applied. Relatives may see the body after the operation if they wish. The process of organ removal does not interfere with the customary funeral or burial arrangements.

### **4. Will they just let you die if they know you want to be a donor?**

No. The doctors looking after a patient make every possible effort to save the patient's life. If despite efforts, the patient suffers brain, only then can organ donation be considered

and a completely different team of doctors is called in. The patient is already dead and the ventilator only keeps the body supplied with oxygen so that heart can continue to beat and circulate blood to preserve the organs so they can be donated for transplantation.

### **5. Which organs can be donated?**

Medical science has succeeded in transplantation of many organs like heart, lungs kidneys, liver, pancreas and some tissues like corneas, skin, heart valves, tendons and bones, of which facilities for kidney, liver and cornea transplantation.

### **6. What if my religious beliefs do not permit donation?**

There is no religion which prohibits organ donation. In fact, below are excerpt from some religious texts:

i) Hinduism: “..... it is said that the soul is invisible, knowing this you should not grieve for the body.” Daan is the act of selfless giving. – Bhagvad Gita, chapter 2:25

ii) Sikhism: “The dead sustain their bond with the living through virtuous deeds”. – Guru Nanak, Guru Granth Sshib, p 143.

iii) Islam: “Whosoever saves the life of one person would be as if he saved the life of all mankind”. – Holy Quran, chapter 5:32

iv) Christianity: Sacrifice and helping others are consistent themes in Christianity, which teaches the principle of seeking for others what you hope others would do for you. Teaching of Jesus Christ: - “..... Freely you have received, freely give.” – Mathew, chapter 10:8

v) Buddhism: “ Organ donation is an extremely positive action.....it will not harm in any way the ‘consciousness’ that is leaving the body. On the contrary, this final act of generosity accumulates good karma”. Sogyal Rinpoche – The Tibetan book of Living & Dying.

### **7. What does the law say about organ donation?**

Govt. of India has passed the Transplantation of Human Organs act 1994 which legally permits organ donation.

### **8. Is the family asked for permission for donation even if a signed donor card is found?**

Yes. Therefore, it is important that you share your decision with your family members so that it is easier for them to carry out your wishes.

Organ donation ensures that you leave behind a legacy of life to others after you. Families of donors say that being asked about organ donation does not upset them or make the situation any worse. By being asked, they are being offered a choice to save other lives in their moment for donation and help precious lives from being lost before their time