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## Active organ donation in two hospitals only

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

**New Delhi:** The organ collection unit of the country's premier hospital is in the lurch. In the past five years, the Organ Retrieval and Banking Organisation (ORBO) at AIIMS – a national nodal centre – has not received a single organ through any private or state-run hospital. The Army hospital and AIIMS are the only active centres for organ retrieval in Delhi. These, too, see very few donations compared to the number of accidental deaths reported in the city.

On World Organ Donation Day – celebrated in India for the first time on Saturday – experts called for changed in the law coupled with a massive awareness campaign to meet the high demand so that precious lives could be saved everyday. "We have received about 780 organs and tissue through donations. Most of these have come from AIIMS Trauma Centre or patients who were admitted at the institute and some from the Army Research and Referral Hospital. In the past five years, no donations have been received from private and other hospitals," said a senior official, who did not wish to be named. In Delhi, many hospitals such as G B Pant Hospital, Apollo Hospital, Fortis Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital have facilities for transplantation of vital human organs, including the heart valve, kidney, liver and eyes. Many patients, however, continue to suffer as a result of the lack of donors.

"Delhi reports over 2,000 accident deaths every year. Most of the incidents involve middle aged persons and youth. These persons are most suitable as there is rarely any medical contraindication such as cancer or tuberculosis. But people do not come forward due to lack of awareness and religious considerations. According to the law, even if a person has pledged to donate his body after death organ can't be retrieved if the family objects. We should introduce the concept of 'presumed consent' in which everybody is considered a donor after death unless he/she has opted out of it," said Dr. Sudhir Gupta, associate professor, forensic medicine and toxicology, AIIMS. He added that it should be mandatory for hospitals to declare all brain deaths and register these with an online organ directory.

Said Dr. Anupam Sibal, medical director, Apollo hospitals, "We have carried out some organ retrievals at our hospital. But it is difficult. Family members are not even ready to accept the death. We need to create more awareness among people and there has to be legal security for doctors."

Pushpa Singh, group transplant coordinator of Fortis hospitals, said, "To announce a patient brain dead and retrieve organs, there is a chain of procedures. A committee of medical experts has to certify the brain death and the patient has to be kept on ventilator support till retrieval process starts. But first, the family has to agree."