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Indians bad organ donors, don't accept brain death

Think Person Dies Only When Heart Stops Beating

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Indians are not only bad organ donors, but also averse to accepting brain death as the end of human life.

Doctors say most Indian families think their near and dear ones have a chance to recover till their hearts beat.

This slow acceptance of brain death – patients who have suffered complete and irreversible loss of all brain functions and are clinically and legally dead – is seriously affecting the country's organ retrieval programme.

Once a patient is declared brain dead, almost 37 different organs and tissues can be harvested, including the most important ones like heart, kidneys, liver, lungs and

to life. Common perception is that a person dies only when the heart beat stops. Awareness about brain death as permanent has to be increased."

Dr. Vij cited the recently passed Transplantation of Human Organs Amendment Act, 2011, which has given a big push to brain death.

Earlier, brain death wasn't even diagnosed. Now, the law has cleared the provision of "required request". Hence, patients admitted in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) will have to be asked by the ICU-in-charge whether she or he has made any request for organ donation.

Now, the law says that the treating physician will have to check the patient for being brain dead and if found so will have to sensitize the family about organ donation along with a transplant coordinator.

In order to reduce India's abysmally low organ availability, the Union health ministry is setting up the country's apex biomaterial centre at Safdarjung Hospital for organ and tissue banking.

"We have set aside Rs. 25 crore for the centre that is under construction. It should be functional by next year and will be headed by a senior directorate general of health services official," a senior ministry official said.

Six transplants in Mumbai in a day

Wednesday turned jout to be the best day ever in the 15-year history of cadaveric donations in Mumbai when as many as six patients underwent transplants at five hospitals. The city may also end up having its best year so far. After Vilasrao Deshmukh's death on Tuesday, doctors had mourned the lack of donations that could have saved the former CM's life. Barely a few hours later, the city witnessed two cadaveric organ donations in quick succession, which led to the six transplants on Wednesday. TNN

Times View

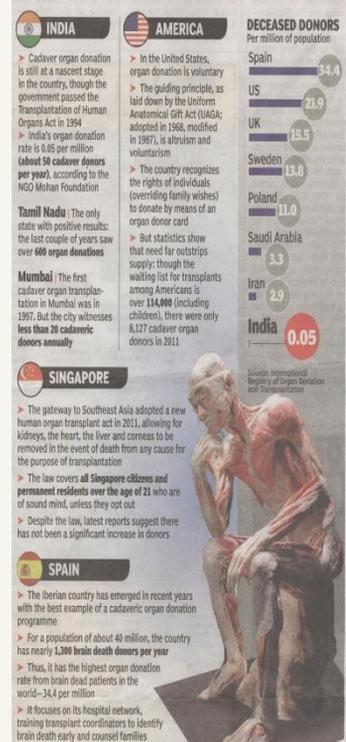
The cadaver donation and organ transplant mechanism in India needs to be unshakled immediately from red tape. Too much of bureaucrats and arbitrariness are the twin problems that block life-saving transplants in most states in India.

Pancreas. Donation of an entire body can help over 40 needy patients.

On the other hand, once the heart stops, stalling blood circulation, only tissues like cornea, skin, bone and heart Valves can be used. Vilasrao Deshmukh's death on Tuesday – after doctors failed to find a compatible liver that could be transplanted on time – is another glaring example of the country's abysmally low organ donation rate.

Dr. Aarti Vij, faculty incharge at AIIMS's Organ Retrieval Banking Organization (ORBO), said, "Indians still find it difficult to accept brain death. When they see and active pulse, a warm body and a beating heart, families think there is still a possibility of the patient coming back

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He added, "The National Biomaterial Centre will contain bones, fresh human amniotic membrane, cadaveric joints like knees, hips and shoulders, cranium bone graft, loose s. bone fragments, skin grafts, cornea, heart valves and vessels. This will be a highly technical body with over 35 officials manning it."

Also on the anvil is as Indian Organ Donor Register – a register of consent, enabling individuals to record their legal decision to becoming an organ or tissue donor after death. "This registry will have information on all types of organ procurement, matching, distribution transplantation and complications. It will also maintain entries of transplant centres, transplant surgeons, dialysis physician and dialysis centers, organ recipients and donors," a ministry note say.