



ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION AND SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

Organ donation is a noble act and it gives the opportunity to save the life of others even after death. Even with the technological improvement and man power resources, there is a huge need for human organs for transplantation. There are lots of hurdles in carrying out the process of organ transplantation due to misconceptions and lack of awareness. To improve organ donation lawfully, the essential factors are creating awareness, clarifying myths and misconceptions, educating legal procedures and eliminating malpractices like organ trade. In all these areas, social workers have major role and this article focuses on procedures of organ transplant and specific roles of social workers in the field of Organ Transplantation.

Key Words: Organ transplantation, Donor, Social worker, MDT

INTRODUCTION

Organ donation is the harvesting of an individual's organ after he or she dies, which helps the needy person for his or her survival.

At International level, the first successful living-related kidney transplant was led by Dr. Joseph Murray and Dr. David Hume at Brigham Hospital in Boston during the year 1954. A kidney was transplanted from Ronald Herrick into his identical twin, Richard. Live donation of parts of other organs were innovated in 1990s, later, there was a lot of growth took place in technology. During the year 2010, Spanish doctors conducted the world's first full face transplant for a man injured in a shooting accident.

In India, the first ever human kidney transplant performed was done at the King Edward Memorial Hospital at Bombay in May 1965, using a cadaver donor in a non-renal failure patient who had hyper-nephroma.

Even with the technological improvement and man power resources, there is a huge need for human organs for transplantation. The report by Times of India (2013) states that 500,000 people die because of non-availability of organs, 200,000 people die of liver disease, 50,000 people die from heart disease, 150,000 people await a kidney transplant but only 5,000 get. 1,000,000 lakh people suffer from corneal blindness and await transplant. The need far exceeds the supply of transplantable organs and it is a great concern of the Government.

To improve organ donation lawfully, the essential factor are creating awareness, clarifying myths and misconception, educating on legal procedures, eliminating malpractices like organ trade. In all these areas, social workers have major role and this article focuses on procedures of organ transplant and specific roles of social worker in the field of Organ Transplantation.

Issues and challenges in Organ Transplantation

Organ donation is a noble act and it gives the opportunity to save the life of others even after death. The term organ transplant refers to the transplantation of an organ from one body to another. The person who receives the organ is the recipient and one who gives is called the donor. This procedure is undertaken for the replacement of the damaged organ in the body of the recipient with the working organ from the body of the donor. The organ donor can be a deceased or alive.

There are lots of hurdles in carrying out the process of organ transplantation. People have lot of doubts about organ donation like is it acceptable by religion, caring of the donor during emergency, organs to be donated, eligibility for donation, age for donation, does the body disfigures after donation, who will take care of donation cost, financial status of the recipient etc.,

Apart from heart, liver, kidney and other organs like lungs, intestines, pancreas, and tissues can be donated including eyes, skin, bone, heart valves and tendons. If a person is waiting for

transplantation, his severity of the illness will be counted and not the financial status. Regarding the eligibility for donation, all are eligible irrespective of their age and medical history. World's youngest organ donor was a baby with anencephaly, born in 2015, who lived for only 100 minutes and donated his kidney to an adult with renal failure (Kat Lay, 2015). Medical condition at the time of death will determine the status of donation.

The major concern of the donor's family is disfiguring after organ donation. Organs are removed surgically and there is no change in the appearance of the donor's body. None of the religion is against organ donation and admits it as a form of charity.

This is not only the responsibility of Government to bring an end/prevent organ trade. Each one of the citizen has the responsibility for which they must gain basic knowledge about procedure, dos and don'ts involved in organ transplantation.

There are various organizations working to promote organ donation. They are

1. TANKER (1993), Chennai – www.tankerfoundation.org
(TAMILNADU KIDNEY RESEARCH FOUNDATION) TamilNadu.
2. Narmada Kidney Foundation (1993),Mumbai – www.narmadakidney.org
3. MOHAN Foundation (1997), Chennai – www.mohanfoundation.org
(Multi Organ Harvesting Aid Network– Chennai/ Delhi–NCR/ Nagpur/ Coimbatore/
Hyderabad)
- 4, NNOS (2005), Chennai – www.nnos.org
(National Network for Organ Sharing)
- 5 .MOTHER (2006),Bhubaneswar – www.mother.org.in
(Multi Organ Transplantation and Human & Educational Research.)
6. NDTNINDIA (2008) Mumbai– www.ndtnindia.org
(NATIONAL DECEASED DONOR TRANSPLANTATION NETWORK)
7. Apex Kidney Foundation (2008),Mumbai – www.apexkidneyfoundation.org

8. Amit Gupta Foundation (2009), New Delhi– www.amityfoundation.org/eng/

9. Gift Your Organ (2011),Karnataka – (www.giftyourorgan.org-),

Irrespective of age, medical criteria and socio economic status all have the right to donate their organs. Prior to that, they have to get consulted with their family members. Apart from holding Donor Card, they can also engage themselves in fund raising and volunteering activities, can participate in seminars and workshops. Few of the agencies are offering diploma courses in Transplant Coordination and Grief counseling. .

Role of Government

The disparity in organ transplantation led to the formulation of various legislations, attempting to regulate the scarce resources (transplantable human organs) and to help establish an equitable system to allocate the organs where they can do the most good. The separate legislation called Transplantation of Human Organ Act (THO) was passed in India in 1994.

The main aims of the Act:

- Regulating removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes.
- Accepting brain death and making it possible to use these patients as potential organ donors.
- Preventing commercial dealing of organs.

Organ transplant law does not allow exchange of money between the donor and the recipient. According to the Act, the unrelated donor has to file an affidavit in the court of a magistrate stating that the organ is being donated out of affection. After which the donor has to undergo number of tests before the actual transplant takes place. The Authorization Committee set up for the purpose ensures that all the documents required under the Act have been supplied. If it is found that the money has been exchanged in the process then both the recipient as well as the donor is considered as prime offenders under the law.

Legally, organ donation can take place from living, genetically-related individuals; from living, unrelated individuals in special circumstances where no unauthorized payment is made to the donor; or from cadavers.

Other Criteria for Organ Transplant in India are:

a) Hospital Criteria

- The concerned hospital should be registered with the appropriate authority for conducting an Organ Transplant.
- A hospital will have to apply for different Organ Transplants e.g. a hospital registered for kidney transplant may not necessarily be allowed for a liver transplant for which another registration has to be applied to the appropriate authority.
- The certificate of registration shall be valid for a period of five years from the date of its issue and shall be renewable.

Other Important criteria for the Hospital

- 24 hours availability of medical and surgical (senior and junior) staff
- 24 hours availability of nursing staff (general and specialty trained)
- 24 hours availability of Intensive Care Units with adequate equipments, staff and support system, including specialists in anesthesiology and intensive care.
- 24 hours availability of laboratory with multiple discipline testing facilities including but not limited to Microbiology, Bio-Chemistry, Pathology and Hematology and Radiology departments with trained staff.
- 24 hours availability of Operation Theatre facilities (OT facilities) for planned and emergency procedures with adequate staff, support system and equipments.

As per the Indian Law, sale of organs was banned. Thus, no foreigner could get a local donor. In case of money exchange, the offender had to pay heavy penalty. Close relatives of the recipient like siblings, parents, children and spouse could donate the organ without clearance from the government. However, they were required to appear before the authorization committee for clearance and approval.

The Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Bill, 2009

The Bill passed in 2009, made certain changes and alterations in the previous law.

The Bill also regularized the transplantation of tissues of the human body, along with human organs. The Act permitted donations from living persons who are near relatives. This

Act also added grandparents and grandchildren to the list of “near relative”. The doctor had to inform the patient or his relatives about the possibility of organ donation and made sure that they given their consent to it. If the organ of the donor and the recipient does not match medically, the bill gave a permission to swap organs with another pair of such a person. The bill made an increase in the penalty for illegal removal of human organs and for receiving or making payment for a human organ.

The Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Bill, 2013

The State health department came up with a composite set of guidelines for dealing with deceitful practices and for countering illegal organ transplant. Now along with an authorization committee, there will be a ‘Verification Committee’ as well in every block for the verification of the details that are offered by the donor and recipient. It will also look after all the other legalities of the matter of organ transplant.

Role of Social workers

Organ transplantation consists of multi disciplinary team and it includes transplant surgeon, transplant physician (i.e. nephrologists) registered nurse transplant coordinator, nutritionist, pharmacist, as well as the in-patient nursing and allied health staff. Psychiatrists and clinical psychologist may also be a part of the team. As members, social workers collaborate closely with them and caring the transplant patient or living donor.

Organ transplantation requires an invasive surgical procedure that has both physical and psychological implications. Social workers play a vital role in dealing the psycho social issues of donors and recipient family. They act as a liaison between the receiver, donor and the medical team.

They are with the transplant patients and living donors throughout the transplant donation process. Their job is a challenging one, both at the transplant center and at the community. At the transplant centers, social workers engage in dealing psychosocial issues of the patients. They do pre-evaluation, guide them, make them to accept for transplant or live donation, will get informed consent, engage in transplant and living donor selection, hospital discharge planning and follow up. They also maintain wait list and do referral services to hospitals and

community resources. They coordinate the delivery of the organs in time to the transplant center.

In the pre evaluation they discuss with the patients on their social, personal, housing, vocational, financial and environmental support and strengths, Cultural and language factors, post transplant caregivers and medication plan, Coping abilities and strategies, Understanding of the risks and benefits of transplantation or live kidney donation, Ability to adhere to a treatment regimen and Mental health history, including substance or alcohol use and/or abuse and how it may impact the success or failure of organ transplant or the safety of the living donor. After psycho social evaluation, Social workers are also involved in getting informed consent from patients.

After transplantation, they engage in post transplant discharge planning for transplant recipients and living donors. In addition to psycho social evaluation for living donors, they function as the independent living donor advocate in many transplant programs.

At community level, awareness on organ donation is the only way of increasing donors. Social workers engage in organizing awareness session to various target groups like office, college, school, club or anywhere else. They are providing training to the field staff and voluntaries on organ transplantation.

CONCLUSION

In the current scenario, awareness on organ transplantation is very essential to increase organ donation to save the life of the needy patients and to control organ trading which is legally punishable. Social workers have the major role in all these areas and they need to be trained at the field level. They need exposure in handling the psycho social issues related to donors and his families, specific roles in the multi disciplinary team and enlarging community participation. For successful delivery of these responsibilities, they have to be placed in agencies working for organ transplantation for field work and block placement.

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