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Tell us
your
thoughts



By HO Integrated Clinical Services Department and Organ Donation Coordinators
Acknowledgement Dr Samuel K S FUNG Dr, PMH CON (Med&Geri)

Safeguarding the Ethical Integrity of Organ Donation and Transplantation

Organ donation brings new life to people with end-stage organ failure. Quality and safety practices can prevent unscrupulous, unethical organ harvesting and transplantation, like commodification and unequal access to transplants. It is imperative that organ donation and transplantation procedures adhere to legal and ethical standards.

Hong Kong has adopted an opt-in system, the Centralised Organ Donation Register for organ donation, which requires individuals to give their explicit consent to donate their organs after death. This voluntary approach encourages people to express their wishes on organ donation with their immediate relatives and friends.

The relevant Hong Kong Ordinances and the Hospital Authority's guidelines have been formulated to ensure the quality and safety of organ donation and transplantation. This approach is conducted in a lawful and ethical manner; and ensures the highest standards. They are not only used to protect patients but also foster community's trust in the healthcare system and promote equal access to life-saving transplants.

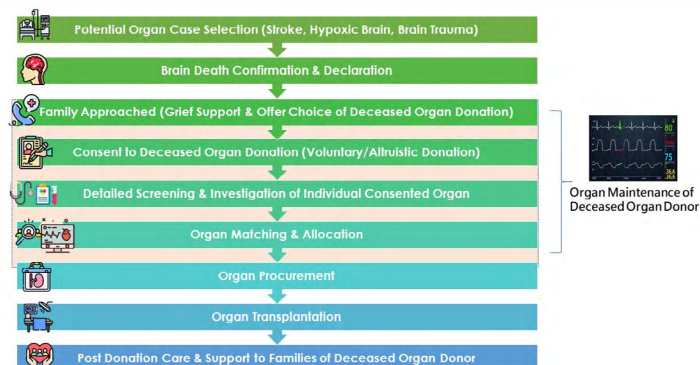


Figure 1: Organ Donation and Transplantation Process

Medical (Therapy, Education and Research) Ordinance (Cap. 278)

This legal framework ensures the use of organs and tissues for therapeutic, educational or research purposes. Surgeons will only procure the organs which have been consented. If an organ is deemed unsuitable for transplantation after assessment, it will not be utilised. Besides, in case of reportable deaths, the consent of the Coroner must be obtained for organ removal; Hospital or Forensic Pathologists are designated to act on the behalf of the Coroner to grant the approval for organ donation.

Human Organ Transplant Ordinance (Cap. 465)

The entire process of organ donation and transplantation requires meticulous documentation to ensure transparency and fairness. Procurement Surgeons must complete Form 1, with details of the donor and the organs removed. Form 2 is filled by Transplant Surgeons to record the donor organs that have been transplanted to the recipients. In rare circumstances, if an organ is deemed unsuitable during procurement and transplantation operations, Form 3 is used to document its disposal. These forms should be submitted within 30 days of organ / tissue removal.

Editorial Comments

Supporting organ donation is a noble but difficult decision for both the patient and their family. With Hong Kong's well-established mechanisms and regulations, we hope that the public will have confidence in the existing systems and support organ donation to bring hope to those in need.

Dr Venus SIU, Chief Manager (Clinical Effectiveness & Technology Management), HAHO

Organ Donation Coordinators in the Hospital Authority

As at October 2024, there are 9 Organ Donation Coordinators (ODCs) working in KWH, PMH, PWH, PYNEH, QEH, QMH, TMH and UCH in the Hospital Authority.

The major duties of the ODCs are as follows:

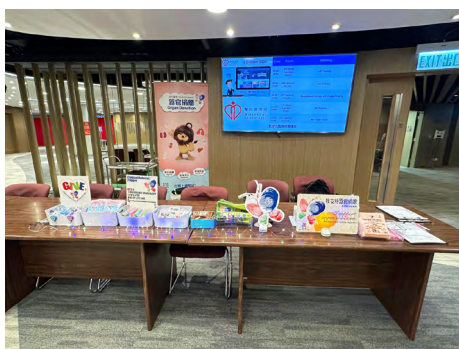
- Getting in touch with the deceased's family members to provide consolation and bereavement support
- Explaining the details of organ donation to family members with a view to seeking their consent to deceased organ donation, and coordinating the process of organ donation with clinical stakeholders
- Educating and promoting organ donation among healthcare professionals to enhance their awareness
- Supporting, planning and coordinating promotional activities on organ donation in HA and Community



ODCs serve as coordinators, clinical resource persons, facilitators, educators and quality assurers in enhancing or maintaining the systematic coordination throughout the overall organ donation process.

ODCs would explain the details of organ donation to the family members and would also seek their written consent to organ donation of the deceased. They would also discuss with family members whether the deceased had expressed a wish for organ donation while alive through checking against the Centralised Organ Donation Register and organ donation card and asking the family members.

The role of the ODCs not only changes the end of a person's story, but they also provide strength to the relatives of the deceased by providing grief counselling, emotional support and the necessary assistance to the family members.



Editorial Comments

Organ donation greatly enhances or saves the life of the person who receives the transplanted organ. The success of an organ donation programme depends on good coordination and the organ donation coordinators are the key. The Organ Donation Coordinators in the 7 Clusters of Hospital Authority play a vital role of promoting organ donation in Hospital Authority and the community.

Hon. Assoc. Prof. William CHUI, Chief Pharmacist, HAHO

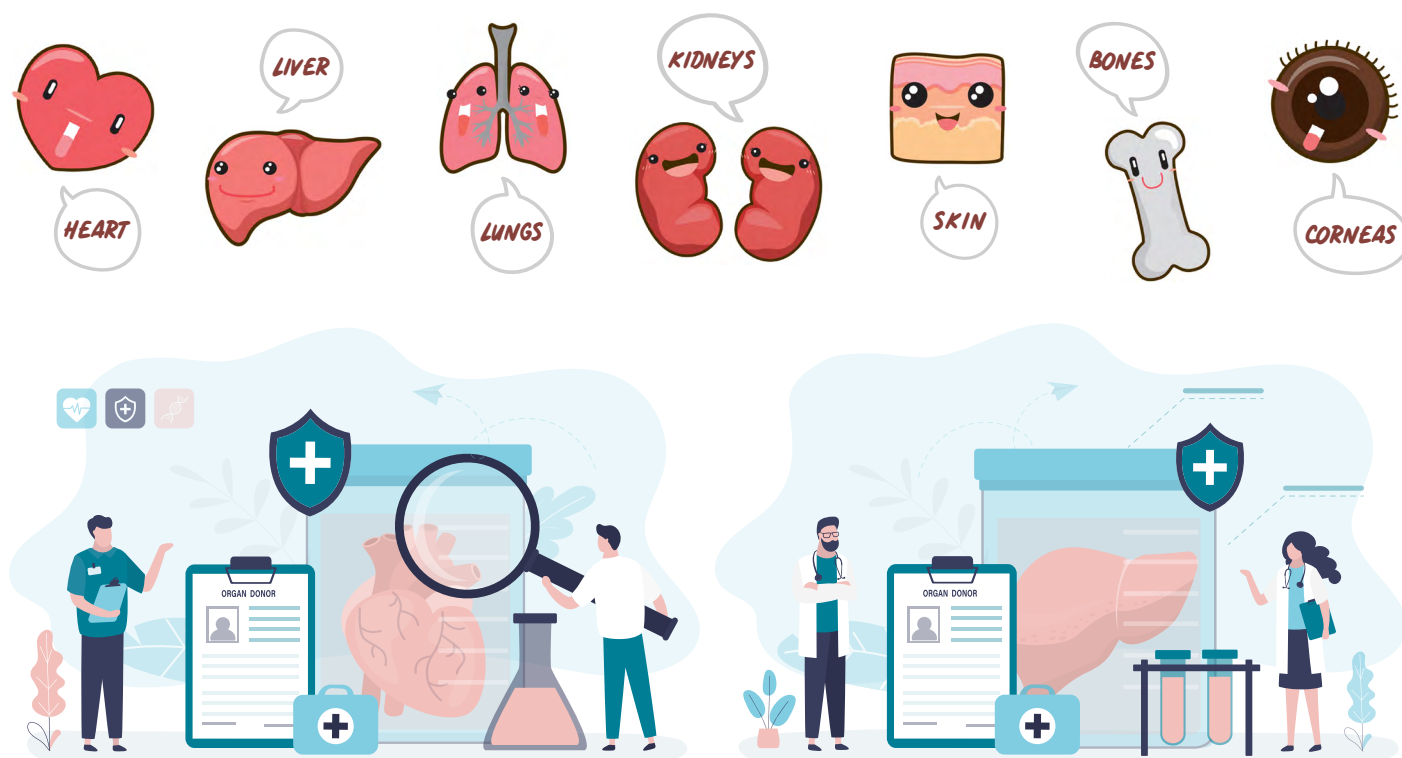
Evaluation and Selection of Possible Organ / Tissue Donor

In the Hospital Authority, a meticulous evaluation process is well established. The evaluation is performed by the Organ Donation Coordinators with the help of corresponding transplant team to screen out unsuitable potential organ and tissue donor for the benefit of recipient.

The crucial step is that potential donors are screened according to the "Guideline for Evaluation and Selection of Deceased Potential Organ / Tissue Donors". This prevents the transmission of serious diseases and ascertains that only safe organs are considered for transplantation.

When consent for donation is obtained from the donor's family, a comprehensive questionnaire assessment of the donor's social and sexual behaviors, as well as their medical histories, including substance use, is conducted. This comprehensive approach ensures that all relevant factors are considered, minimising potential risks, and maximising the safety and effectiveness of organ transplantation.

Mandatory blood testing for organ functions and serology will be conducted to evaluate the suitability and infectious status of the donors. Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) typing is performed, this compatibility testing is essential for matching donors with recipients to reduce the risk of organ rejection. Imaging studies are also employed to assess the structural integrity of donated organs and to check for any potential structural anomalies or malignancies that could compromise transplant success.



Editorial Comments

Organ donation gives a second chance at life to patients in need of organ transplant, not only improving the health and quality of life of the organ recipients, but also relieving the burden of their family as carers. The comprehensive evaluation and meticulous selection process established in the Hospital Authority ensure that organ transplantation can be done safely and effectively. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all the clinical teams, quality organ donation service can be delivered in HA.

Dr Osburga CHAN, Service Director (Quality & Safety), KCC

System to Facilitate Organ Donation Process

Organ Registry and Transplant System (ORTS)

Organ Donation and Transplantation Service employs a comprehensive system known as ORTS (Figure 2) to manage both donors' and recipients' clinical information. This system facilitates communication effectively among Coordinators, Procurement Teams, Transplant Teams and Transplantation and Immunogenetic laboratory.

The Solid Organ Allocation System with Heart, Lung, Liver and Renal Registries are incorporated into the ORTS, which prioritises recipients on their respective transplant waiting lists. This system is designed to allocate organs based on medical urgency with clinical scorings, thereby fostering fairness and transparency in the organ allocation.

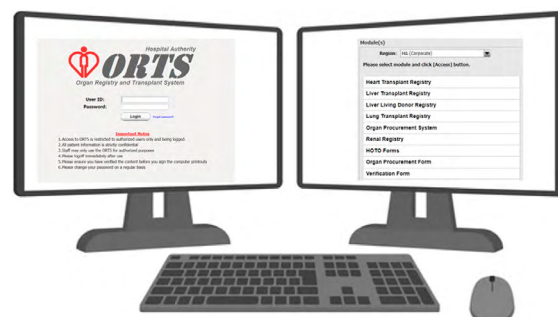


Figure 2: Organ Registry and Transplant System (ORTS)

Organ Procurement System (OPS)

Donor information is entered by Organ Donation Coordinators (ODCs) into the OPS, which is an integral component of ORTS, enhancing the ability to coordinate and streamline the organ donation and transplantation process. ODCs are responsible for maintaining a comprehensive electronic record documentation of the entire organ donation process for deceased donors. By utilizing the OPS, ODCs ensure that essential donor information is readily available to transplant teams for evaluating donor suitability and selection. Furthermore, proper documentation is crucial for traceability and accountability. Importantly, the information is restricted and accessed only by designated personnel, so the system safeguards the confidentiality of donors and recipients, fostering privacy and trust in Organ Donation and Transplantation Service.

Quality and safety are critical priorities for the Organ Donation and Transplantation Service, without sound practices in organ donation process, it can seriously jeopardise otherwise excellent outcomes. Finally, the current local practices are monitored and evaluated by Hospital Authority Head Office and Human Organ Transplant Board, along with regular meetings to ensure ongoing compliance and improvement.

Editorial Comments

Establishing a transparent and synchronized organ donation system for donors and recipients will enhance equity and streamline the organ matching process. This advancement addresses potential gaps in the documentation of critical information for clinical teams, marking a significant milestone in organ transplantation. It not only profoundly transforms recipients' lives but also fortifies the entire process.

Ms Judy CHU, Cluster Manager (Quality & Safety), KWC

Trivia

What are the "3S" in Organ Donation?

- (A) Sign-up
- (B) Speak-out
- (C) Spread-out
- (D) Support

Answer: A, B, C only

Sign-up 登記意願
於中央器官捐贈登記名冊
登記你捐贈器官的意願
You can register your wish to donate organs at the
Centralised Organ Donation Register

Speak-out 告訴家人
向家人分享你的意願
Speak out your wish to your family members

Spread-out 傳播希望
鼓勵身邊家人朋友支持器官捐贈，重燃別人的生命
Encourage your family and friends to support organ donation
and rekindle the lives of those in need

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