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Factors Associated with Posthumous Organ Donation for Transplantation

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Abstract:

*To determine factors associated with posthumous organ donation for transplantation in Pakistan. **Methods:** Convenience sampling was used to generate a sample of 60; 30 interviews were successfully completed and used for data analysis. Date collection was carried out by having face to face interviews in selected public areas of Lahore, Pakistan. **Findings:** Most of the respondents had a favorable attitude towards organ donation and were willing to donate organs. They were having knowledge about this issue but for religiosity there were of mixed opinions and most of the respondents were unaware about signing a donor card. **Conclusion:** effective education campaigns and policies are required to educate people properly about organ donation and process of how they can donate organs by the involvement of media, religious scholars and health practitioners as well.*

Keywords: organ donation, posthumous organ donation, attitude, knowledge, Pakistan, donor card, religious beliefs.

1. Introduction

Organ transplantation is the process to transfer any living organ or tissue in order to restore or decrease disability of any ill or injured person. Initially, in 1930s this process was started (Robson, Razack, & Dublin, 2010) and in 1950s first successful kidney transplantation was done which opened new hope and energy for life (Robson et al., 2010). Worldwide, since last few decades, organ transplantation is emerging as successful therapy in order to treat failure of the organ failure (Volz Wenger & Szucs, 2011). With improvement in medical technology, massive demand has been generated for organs for betterment of human being. Unfortunately, this demand is facing poorest availability of the organs (Sirois, Sears, & Marhefka, 2005). The gap between demand and supply of the organs is the biggest challenge for transplantation (Robinson, Klammer, Perryman, Thompson, & Arriola, 2014). This gap is a well-known global problem (Raghavendra, Karinagannanavar, Khan, & Vandana, 2014). Transplantation can be done either by living donors or organs can be taken from a brain-dead person. The concept of transplantation is quite sophisticated and acceptable in developed countries. For instance, more than 20,000 transplants were made in USA in 2013 and still thousands of people were waiting for organs (Phillipson, Larsen-Truong, Pitts, & Nonu, 2015). In developing countries, concept of transplantation needs to be made available to common man to be accepted (Rizvi et al., 2011) and for this it is very important that public needs to be aware about transplantation and then donation of the organs. Since last many years, this issue is becoming a serious concern for an ethical debate in Pakistan (Saleem et al., 2009). Pakistan is a populous developing country with more than 180 million of the population (Ali, Qureshi, Jilani, & Zehra, 2013). It has been estimated that each year in Pakistan around 30,000 people die because of the renal failure and approximately 100,000 die due to liver failure each year (Mustafa, 2016). These dying patients can be survived if they get organ for transplantation. Recent study on organ donation in Pakistan has shown that daily around 16 persons are being added in waiting list of the organs (Shahid, Arshad, Munir, Aleem, & Imam, 2016). Until 2016, only five individuals have donated their organs in Pakistan (Dawn, 2016). Because of the poor health facilities, and uncertainties created by the religious scholars, very few people are aware about posthumous organ donation in Pakistan (Zubair, 2012). This issue has been very less researched in Pakistan context. Very few studies have been published during last decade (Ashraf et al., 2005; Badrolhisam & Zakaria, 2012; Khan et al., 2011). An important issue in posthumous organ donation is religious beliefs. These religious beliefs can complicate a person's decision to be or not to be an organ donor (Bresnahan, Guan, Smith, Wang, & Edmundson, 2010). It is very important to understand attitude and knowledge of general public towards posthumous organ donation in Pakistan. By observing behaviors, it would become easy to develop appropriate educational campaigns to encourage people for this noble cause. As policy makers may need to know about the feelings and beliefs that are important to increase people's willingness towards organ donation after death (Amir & Haskell, 1997). This study is part of a larger study and aims to identify factors associated with consent for posthumous organ donation and signing a donor card.

2. Methods and Results

2.1. Population

The topic of posthumous organ donation is a sensitive issue; hence it was difficult to talk to general public on this issue. The study population included a total of 30 respondents for interviews. A total of 60 respondents were called of which 30 did not wish to answer resulting a response rate of 50%. All the respondents were aged more than 18, Muslims and education level equaling or more than graduation. People who or their family have undergone transplantation or who were working with or related organ donation centers were not included in interviews.

2.2. Findings

Five main themes emerged from the interviews. These were knowledge, attitude, religious beliefs, willingness for organ donation and signing donor card.

2.3. Level of Knowledge and Information on Organ Donation

Lack of knowledge and information is often regarded as a barrier in organ donation. In our case, most of the people were aware about organ donation and mostly social media was the source of information and knowledge about this issue. Yet, some respondents were interested to get more information about organ donation.

2.4. Attitude towards Organ Donation

Generally, in previous studies, people do have positive attitude for organ donation. In our case, results were consistent with the previous findings. Most of the respondents were possessing positive attitude for organ donation.

2.5. Religious Beliefs

All the respondents were Muslims and their religious beliefs had a mixed result. For some, organ donation is allowed in Islam and religion encourages organ donation. And few were of the opinion that they are not willing to donate as it is prohibited in our religion.

2.6. Willingness to Donate

Among our respondents, most of the persons were willing to donate their organs but none of them had ever donated any living organ.

2.7. Knowledge about Organ Donor Card

There was a lack of information about organ donor card. Most of the respondents were unaware that for donating organ, they do need to sign a card. None of our respondent had signed a donor card.

3. Discussion

Organ donation decision is quite complexed issue, which strongly base on one's own personal beliefs. We identified few important variables regarding organ donation behavior. Many of the respondents made decisions on their personal beliefs i.e. their own level knowledge and religious beliefs about organ donation. In spite of some reservations, many of the respondents had positive attitude towards organ donation and are willing to donate, yet they are unaware about the criteria of how they can donate like signing a donor and communication with family. As there is a huge gap between demand and supply of organs for transplantation, it is very important to educate people about posthumous organ donation, its procedures and registration process. Future studies and policy makers can focus on to get more insight about few important issues as discussed. Effective education campaigns and policies are required to educate people properly by the involvement of media, religious scholars and health practitioners as well.

4. Limitations of study

There were few limitations of the study. Because of the time and cost constraint, there was a small population size and all respondents were from the Muslim community. Hence, we cannot compare with other religion's views. Larger sample size and respondents from different religions can give a better perspective within religiosity.

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