Organ Donation Rates: How the US Stacks Up

US Organ Donation Rate Fourth Highest in World

By SYDNEY LUPKIN

June 18, 2013—

Facebook may have provided a boost to organ donation in the United States since its donor registration button launched last year, but organs are still scarce, and about 18 people die every day as they wait on a transplant list, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Click here to learn how to use Facebook's "Share Life" tool.

But not all countries require that people who choose to donate organs register as organ donors at the Department of Motor Vehicles or online as we do here.

Some countries have opt-out systems in which citizens are presumed organ donors unless they formally opt not to donate their organs when they die. Other countries even offer incentives such as payment for living kidney donations or preferred treatment for donors if they ever need to become a transplant recipient.

Read on to learn how organ donation practices differ around the world.

How Do Other Countries Increase Organ Donation?

United States

Although there are more than 118,000 people on the organ transplant waiting list in the United States, only 8,143 underwent transplants from deceased donors in 2012, according to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, which allocates organs as a result of the National Organ Transplant Act of 1984. With its opt-in program, the United States has the fourth-highest organ donor rate, with 26 donors per million people in the population, according to data from the National Transplant Organization in Spain, which compiles organ donation rates annually. The United States, however, leads the world in actual transplant rates, which Dr. Tom Mone, a past president of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations, says means doctors can use more of the organs they harvest. "It's fair to say we're doing as well or better than anyone else," said Mone, who is now the CEO of One Legacy, a nonprofit
organization focused on organ donation. "But we have such a large number of people and a very good chronic care system, so they can wait longer as the waiting list grows." Registration is different in each state, and a few have proposed opt-out systems in which people are automatically assumed to be consenting donors unless they opt out. However, this has never gotten far in state legislatures, said OPTN spokesman Joel Newman. "Once these bills are introduced, concerns arise about individual rights, rights to make an individual decision," Newman said. Colorado tried to get an opt-in law passed a few years ago, but the lawmaker who introduced the bill pulled it in 2011 because the reaction was so negative, according to the Denver Post. Mone said about 75 percent of the people who are brain dead and could donate organs actually wind up donating them. That's not bad, considering that of all people who are eligible to donate blood, only 7 percent do so, he said. "The bad news is even if they donated 100 percent of the time, we would not wipe out our list," he said.

How Do Other Countries Increase Organ Donation?

Spain

Spain is widely considered the gold standard in organ donation because it has had the highest organ donation rate of any other country in the world, with 35.3 organ donors per million people. (This compares with 26 organ donors per million people in the United States.) Unlike the United States, which has an opt-in policy, Spain has an opt-out policy, meaning citizens are automatically organ donors unless they opt out. But Mone said Spain still asks families whether they want to donate their loved ones' organs before they're harvested. As such, there's no true presumed consent program. "While there are a number of European countries that have a law [for presumed consent], none of them have actually relied upon them," he said. This week, top doctors and health officials reportedly visited Spain to learn more about how to improve their organ donation and transplant systems, according to the Spanish news site Local. But not all opt-out programs are created equal, said Dr. James Lim, chief of transplant surgery at Hackensack University Medical Center. "Look at places like Greece," he said, adding that Greece has an opt-out system but poorer organ donation rates. (It has 6.9 donors per million people in the population, according to the National Transplant Organization in Spain.) He said a lot has to do with educating the public on how organ donation works, especially if it's new to the culture. Even in New Jersey, he said he's heard urban legends about organ transplants in which patients believe doctors want organ donors to die so they can harvest their organs. Those rumors simply aren't true, he said. Click
here to watch Kelly Ripa and Dr. Richard Besser bust some organ donation myths.

How Do Other Countries Increase Organ Donation?

Israel

In Israel, there's a special incentive to donate organs: If you ever need an organ transplant, you'll be given priority as a recipient over someone who isn't a donor. Mone said Israel has seen an uptick of organ donor registrants since the program was introduced a year ago, but it's too soon to tell whether the uptick resulted from the incentive. "The results are preliminary but very promising," Mone said. "In the U.S., it's spurring good conversation."

How Do Other Countries Increase Organ Donation?

Iran

Although the National Organ Transplant Act of 1984 made it illegal to buy or sell organs in the United States, selling a kidney is legal in Iran and has been for more than a decade, said Mone. The program has helped Iran keep up with its demand for kidneys, but the vast majority of people selling them are among the nation's poor. As a result, some of them have faced health problems from selling their kidneys, Mone said, citing a recent study. "It's not as benign as one would hope it would be," said Mone.

How Do Other Countries Increase Organ Donation?

Other Countries

Here are a few more other countries donation rates, in donors per million in the population, according to the National Transplant Organization, from Spain's report: Spain: 35.3 Croatia: 34.4 Portugal: 28.1 United States: 26 France: 25 Norway: 24.5 United Kingdom: 17 Sweden: 15.4 Canada: 15.4 Australia: 14.9 Israel: 10.8 Ecuador: 2.2 This list doesn't include rates for all countries.

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http://abcnews.go.com/Health/organ-donation-rates-us-stacks/print?id=19437070
Spain leads world in organ donation, transplant: expert

MADRID, April 20 (Xinhua) -- The Spanish health service may have suffered a series of cutbacks as a result of the economic crisis, but there is one area in which Spain remains a leader and the Spanish people set an example of solidarity for the rest of the world: organ donation and transplantation.

In the 25 years since its creation in 1989, the Spanish National Transplant Organization (ONT) has overseen more than 90,500 organ transplant operations, including over 57,000 kidney transplants, 21,576 liver transplants, 7,024 heart transplants, more than 3,200 lung transplants and over 1,500 pancreas transplant operations.

This is in part due to the fact that Spain has the highest rate of organ donors in the world. In 2013, a total of 1,655 people in Spain donated their organs, with an average of 35.1 donors per million people, well above that of the European Union's 19.2, the Unite States' 25.8, and even four times of the Latin America's 8.2.

Speaking to Xinhua, Dr Rafael Matesanz of the National Transplant Organization said the average number of donors in Spain was between 5 and 6 donors per day, but "there are peaks of 14, 15 or 16 donors and the activity can vary."

It was during one of those peaks that the ONT set a new record. "Very recently we achieved 45 transplants in one day," said Matesanz. He added that when it began operating 25 years ago in 1989, the ONT oversaw a total of 550 operations.

This becomes even more impressive bearing in mind the complex process that needs to take place before a transplant operation can even begin.

There are 181 hospitals in Spain authorized to take organ donations and each of these has a coordinator who has to speak to the donor's family and a judge before organ extraction can take place.

This has to be done following the correct procedure regarding X-rays and analysis before the coordinator gets in contact with the National Transplant Organization in Madrid.

The coordination center at the ONT has a list of people who need organs and they look for an appropriate match for the organ.

There can be several recipients for one donor in different parts of the country. Once the person to receive the organ has been established, the ONT then has to organize transport for the organ to reach one of the 43 Spanish hospitals authorized to perform transplants along with the recipient and the team to perform the operation.

This substantial logistics operation has to take place in a maximum of five or six hours to ensure the organ does not begin to deteriorate.

"It is a complex process, which sometimes needs over 100 people to take part, including the donor's hospital, the recipient hospital, police, transport, and aircraft etc." said Matesanz.

The year 2010 saw the work of the ONT was rewarded with the Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation.

"I think that transplant in Spain is an honor of national pride. We have been leading the world in the percentage of donors and number of transplants for 22 years," commented Matesanz, who believes his organization will have even more work in the future.

"Transplants are a technique which needs constant renewal. When we started 25 years ago, we didn't expect it would grow to be like what it is now. We are introducing new techniques everyday, such as on preserving organs," he said.

He said he believes that transplantation technique is going to continue evolving and growing. "It's reasonable to foresee that in five to ten years we will be doing new things and we will have more activity than at the present."

Spain notches up world organ transplant record

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Surgeons in Spain transplanted a record number of organs in 2013, the government said on Monday, keeping the country world leader in the field despite heavy health spending cuts.
Expats jump on Spain's organ donor bandwagon (11 Apr 13)

Transplants of all kinds increased in Spain, particularly lung replacements, up nearly 20 percent, and pancreas transplants, up more than 10 percent, the health ministry said.

A record total of 4,279 transplants were carried out in Spain in 2013, of which 2,552 were of kidneys, 1,093 of livers and 285 of lungs, it said.

"The Spanish transplant system, which has been the world leader for 22 years, has again demonstrated its vitality," said the head of the state National Transplant Organization (ONT), Rafael Matesanz.

"Its activity increased in 2013 in very difficult circumstances," he told a news conference, presenting a transplants report.

Spain's government in 2012 cut the annual national health budget by €7 billion euros ($9.6 billion) a year in its efforts to strengthen public finances, causing waiting lists for non-urgent surgery to lengthen.

But the national transplant system has thrived over the years, with the number of donors increasing from 14 per million people in 1989 to 35 per million in 2011, Matesanz said.

That put Spain far ahead of other countries, with 26 donors per million people in the United States, 25 in France and just under 15 in Germany, according to the transplant body's latest figures from 2011.

The so-called Spanish Model achieved such good results that its organizational measures have been adopted by the World Health Organization and many countries in Europe and Latin America.

"Spain's management model brings the best out in people," ONT told The Local in 2013.

"Ninety percent of bereaved family members tell us that allowing their loved one's organs to be donated helped them to overcome their loss."

Spain is also considered a pioneer in certain complex operations, having carried out some of the first double transplants of arms and legs.

http://www.thelocal.es/20140113/world-leader-spain-notches-up-organ-transplant-record


Decadal analysis of deceased organ donation in Spain and the United States linking an increased donation rate and the utilization of older donors.

Halldorson J1, Roberts JP.

Abstract

After the foundation of the National Transplant Organization, Spanish rates of deceased donor donation rapidly outpaced US growth over the decade from 1989 to 1999. An analysis of the following decade, 1999-2009, demonstrated a markedly flattened growth curve for Spanish deceased donor organ procurement, which increased only 2.4% from 33.6 to 34.4 donors per million population (pmp). In comparison, over the same decade in the United States, the rate of deceased donation increased from 20.9 to 26.3 donors pmp (25.8%). An age group comparison demonstrated a much higher donation rate among older donors in Spain. For example, the number of donors older than 70 years increased from 3.8 to 8.8 pmp (a 132% increase), and they now constitute 25.4% of all Spanish organ donors. In contrast, the number of US donors older than 70 years increased from 1.0 to 1.3 pmp, and they constitute only 4.4% of total deceased donors. Over the same decade, the number of younger donors (15-30 years old) decreased from 6.6 to 2.5 pmp (a 62% decrease) in Spain, and this contrasted with a slightly increased US donation rate for the same subgroup (a 15.5% increase from 5.8 to 6.7 pmp). Although older donors were more rarely used in the United States, growth in donation over the 2 decades (1989-2009) was strongly associated with the utilization of donors aged 65 or older (P < 0.01). United Network for Organ Sharing regions demonstrated significant differences in utilization rates for older donors. In conclusion, strategies aimed toward achieving US donation rates equivalent to the Spanish benchmark should target improved utilization rates for older donors in the United States instead of emulating elements of the Spanish organ procurement system.

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Organ transplantation in Israel

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Organ transplantation in Israel has historically been low compared to other Western countries due to a common belief that organ donation is prohibited under Jewish law. This changed with the passage of new organ donation laws in 2008. If two patients have the same medical need, priority will now go to the patient who has signed an organ donor card, or whose family members have donated an organ (though medical necessity still takes precedence). The law also defines "brain death" as an indication of death for all legal purposes, including organ donation. Additionally the law provides financial reimbursement to living donors for medical expenses due to donation and lost time at work. Organ trafficking is explicitly banned. Health insurance plans can no longer reimburse patients who go abroad to receive transplants.

Legal status[edit]

Until 2008, there was no law prohibiting organ trafficking in Israel.[1] In 2008, the Knesset approved two laws designed to regulate organ donations. The first law defines brain-respiratory death as a situation in which person who has no blood pressure, fails to breathe without external life support systems and has no response from the pupils or any other reflexes is declared dead by two certified doctors.[2]

The second law provides for various benefits to living organ donors, such as reimbursement for medical expenses and lost work up to 18,000 NIS (roughly US$5,000), priority on the transplant list should they require a future organ donation,[3] waived self-participation fee for any medical service resulting from the donation, and the attainment of a "chronic patient" status, which entitles the holder to additional medical benefits. In addition, the law criminalizes organ trafficking, receiving compensation for organs, or acting as an organ broker.[2] This law was cited as a model by proposed 2009 legislation in the US.[4]

Organizations[edit]

Israel operates a National Transplant and Organ Donation Center, established in 1993 as an institute of the Ministry of Health.[5] The center incorporates the ADI organization, founded by private citizens, which maintains a database of donors and sponsors donor cards. As of 2009, the database contains around 500,000 names of donors, about 10% of Israel's adult population.
Since some ultra-religious Jews feel the 2008 law does not properly address halachic questions, Israel's Chief Rabbinate has decided to issue an organ donor card of its own, which allows organ harvesting from the potential donor only if brain death is determined according to the strictest letter of the law - for example by requiring that brain death be confirmed using electronic equipment rather than just the determination of a physician.[6]

The Halachic Organ Donor Society is active in Israel trying to raise awareness about Halachic acceptance of brain-stem death and support of organ donation. Most Israelis are secular but when it comes to death, most turn to Orthodox rabbis to seek guidance. That is why Israel has one of the lowest organ donor rates in the Western world. The Halachic Organ Donor Society has succeeded in recruiting more than 230 rabbis to register for organ donor cards. It has given presentations to over 30,000 Jews around the world to encourage them to donate organs to the general public. This public awareness campaign has increased the number of Israelis who have signed organ donor cards.

Prevalence of donations[edit]

Due to the large population of orthodox Jews in Israel, organ donation is a controversial issue. The rate of agreement to organ donation is only 45%, which is 50% lower than the rate in most Western countries.[7] The percentage of people who hold an organ donation card in Israel is only 10 percent,[8,9] in Western countries the rate is 30-40%. As a result, there are about 1,000 Israelis currently on the "waiting list" for organs, and it is estimated that roughly 10% of them die annually, due to a lack of donations.[9]

Yaakov Levi, the director of the Heart Transplant Unit at Sheba Medical Center has called for organs to be allocated first to those who are willing to donate their own organs and have possessed a donor card for several years. This call was accepted and incorporated into the 2008 law. According to the New York Times, "Organ donation rates in Israel are among the lowest in the developed world, about one-third the rate in Western Europe, in large part because of what Health Ministry officials and doctors describe as a widespread impression that Jewish law prohibits transplants as a 'desecration of the body.'" [10]

Organ trafficking[edit]

Main article: Organ trade

According to organ trade expert Nancy Scheper-Hughes of Organ Watch (in 2001), Israel had become a "pariah" in the organ transplant world. The lack of donations due to Jewish custom heightened the disparity between the supply and demand of organs. This led to the popularity of "transplant tourism" in which patients in need of organs travel to medical centres abroad to receive organs.[11] Prior to the 2008 law prohibiting it, some Israeli organ brokers advertised on the radio and in newspapers. Kidneys, which are the most traded organ, may fetch up to $150,000 for brokers who usually pay the donors far less.[10] The Jewish weekly newspaper The Forward reported in the wake of this scandal that an Organ Trafficking Prohibition Act of 2009, sponsored by Democratic Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, has yet to be officially introduced in the U.S., but that its proposed language cites Israel as a model of a country that has enacted a law providing benefits for organ donors.[4]

The lack of regulations against organ trafficking prior to 2008 made Israel a focal point for the international organ trade. Health insurance would reimburse Israelis for organ transplants done abroad, but this has been banned in the new law.[12]

As a result of all the abuses of the illegal market in human organs, there is a growing movement of activists in Israel and in America to legalize a Government-regulated program...
to offer financial incentives to people for living kidney donations and to families for deceased donations from brain-stem dead donors. This movement is headed, among other organizations, by the Alliance for Organ Donor Incentives.

S’pore organ donation rate still low despite law

Friday, 26 l 11 l 2010 Source: The Straits Times
By: Judith Tan

THE number of organs donated for transplants in Singapore remains dismally low, despite a law requiring donations by all after death, unless they decide to opt out. Around 2 per cent to 3 per cent of Singaporeans opted out of donating organs after death between 2004 and last year. The rest of the shortfall is due to factors such as organs not being usable because of disease or injury.

Experts say donation rates here are very low compared to those for countries such as Spain and Norway, where most people are happy to donate. Around 2 per cent to 3 per cent of Singaporeans opted out of donating organs after death between 2004 and last year. The rest of the shortfall is due to factors such as organs not being usable because of disease or injury.

Supporters of transplants believe the number of opt-outs is higher than it should be because some grieving family members, unaware that the deceased wanted to donate, are objecting. Doctors may then be reluctant to press the issue.

Professor A. Vathsala, who heads the Adult Renal Transplantation Programme at the National University Hospital, said that because the law assumes consent for transplants, there is often no effort made by individuals to inform family members about the process, which could lead to more saying “yes”. Associate Professor Krishnakumar Madhavan, president of the Society of Transplantation (Singapore), added: “Although there is a mandate to donate... under Hota (Human Organ Transplant Act) rules, there are instances where hostilities arise from family members regarding donation. One reason for this is – non-objectors fail to inform family members of their desire and willingness to donate.”

When it comes to living donors, the number of livers donated rose from 13 in 2004 to 33 in 2008 and 36 last year, National Organ Transplant figures show. But the number of kidneys from living donors fluctuated, from 88 in 2007 to 83 in 2008 and back up to 87 last year. The waiting list for kidney transplants has 460 names. About 25 people are waiting for livers. The rate of live donations remains low even though Hota – which allows organs of citizens and permanent residents to be donated for transplants on death – was amended in March last year to allow living donors to be reimbursed for expenses. These include the cost of health checks, laboratory tests, surgery, hospitalisation and follow-ups, as well as loss of income as a result of the donation. The reimbursement comes from the $10 million Kidney Live Donor Support Fund set up by the National Kidney Foundation (NKF). Those eligible can apply to be covered for their medical and insurance expenses and be paid up to $5,000 for loss of income.

A check with NKF found eight out of 10 applicants had been approved to receive funding by the Transplant Ethics Committee and NKF management since the fund was launched in November last year. Two are still awaiting approval. The foundation’s chief executive Eunice Tay said: “All 10 applicants are relative-related kidney donations. This is an indication that donors are motivated altruistically and are not seeking any monetary rewards.” Prof Madhavan said reasons for the low number of liver transplant could also include the high incidence of Hepatitis B here. “The deficit could also be Singapore being too fastidious if the donor has a fatty liver.
But studies have shown such livers could be transplanted with good results," he said.

Prof Vathsala said that although legislation is necessary to ensure that people donate, "legislation has reached its limits". "The law can only be permissive, but ultimately organ donation relies on the magnanimity of the people of a country," she said. She added that Spain and Norway stand out in the world for their short list of patients waiting for kidney transplants. Norway has very high living and deceased donor rates, while Spain has high deceased donor rates. Prof Vathsala said that people in these two countries accept that patients have better outcomes with a kidney from a living donor, and almost everyone there is a willing donor. She said education should play a big part in raising awareness of organ donation "even within the school curriculum". "The lack of awareness is not just here but universal, and as a society we need to broach this with the public, starting with the younger generation," Prof Vathsala added.

Organ donation gaining wide acceptance among Saudis

Families are increasingly embracing the concept of organ transplants by overcoming cultural and religious concerns as Saudi Arabia expands its program to reduce the wait for patients in desperate need of organs.
Dr. Faisal Shaheen, director general of the Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation (SCOT), said transplant operations have increased with 92 percent of the families of brain dead patients consenting to donation when they know that it was the choice of the deceased. About 40 percent of families give their consent if have they have no knowledge of the patient’s opinion on organ donation.

“There’s a clear increase in the number of cases where organs were removed for transplant,” Shaheen said, adding that awards granted to Saudi and non-Saudi donors are almost the same. According to Shaheen, 527 kidney transplant operations were performed from 2003 to 2007, which increased to 673 (total from 2003 to 2012) in 2012. Liver transplants numbered 175 between 2003 and 2007, and increased to 271 in 2012. Heart transplants that numbered only 42 between 2003 and 2007 increased to 94 during the last five years. Only eight pancreas transplants were performed. Shaheen said 37 percent more brain-death cases were reported to the center in the last five years. This demonstrates an improvement in doctors’ awareness and the performance of hospitals’ intensive care units responsible for reporting potential cases to the center.

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saegh, internal medicine consultant at a dialysis center, said he believed society members’ awareness regarding organ donation has improved.

“However, officials have some concerns regarding the issue of organ trafficking,” Al-Saegh said. “Organ donation has to be expanded under the supervision and control of a specialist body that organizes and coordinates donations and operations in a way that guarantees commercialization does not get involved.”

Al-Saegh stressed the importance of promoting controlled organ donation and transplantation. He said it starts with domestic scientific research and “not merely relying on the results of similar operations abroad before implementing them here.”

He also emphasized the importance of religious scholars’ role in disseminating awareness of organ donations of brain-dead patients. There is a gap between the number of those who need transplants and that of available organs, he said.

Shaheen agreed. He said the issue is one where religious, moral and social values overlap. The difficulties that face organ transplantation are from people refusing the principle because of social conventions or because they do not have the correct information about brain death. However, Shaheen said it is important to clarify that Islam permits and encourages organ donation for the sake of saving the lives of those in need. He added that there are clear fatwas permitting it from the Board of Senior Scholars and from the Islamic Fiqh Academy. In terms of the moral aspect of the issue, the center applies clear procedures that guarantee non-commercialization and preserve the rights of donors and recipients, he said.

“For the donation of living relatives, medical committees are present in every hospital to examine a donor’s compatibility and make sure that the donation of one kidney or part of the liver would not affect the donor’s health,” Shaheen said.

For brain-dead organ donation, there are brain death pronouncement forms that must be signed by two consultants under the supervision of a SCOT team that ensure that all protocol procedures were followed. The deceased is transferred to the operation room for organ removal as soon as the family’s consent is obtained.

Shaheen said the Kingdom follows the World Health Organization’s criteria stipulating that donating organs and tissues have to be performed within moral restrictions and medical standards that is based on providing better health care for patients and preserving the rights of donors. The decision to donate organs while alive must be voluntary and requires ensuring the person was not pressured in any way.

Donation of organs after death requires ensuring that the deceased indicated when alive that he wanted to do it or was not opposed to it — with the family’s consent and as per the laws regulating organ donations in the country. For all countries there are clear medical measures for approving a donor and removing and distributing the organs.

Facebook has launched a new tool it called Organ Donor to encourage 900 million users to help and save the lives of patients all over the world through organ donation. The site’s founder and executive director said the tool is aimed at spreading awareness, adding that thousands die around the world every year because of the lack of organ donors.

“A donor, alive or dead, is honored by being granted King Abdul Aziz Medal in addition to a financial award. A donor is also granted permanent discount on Saudi Arabian Airlines flight tickets and a free periodic medical follow up at the facility where the donation took place.

Organ transplant started in the Kingdom with the Board of Senior Scholars’ approval in 1981. Crown Prince Salman established a center to coordinate organ donation two years later.

Statistics

Up-to-date statistics can be located by contacting Transplant Australia Head Office or you can follow the following link to the ANZDATA website (http://www.anzdata.org.au/).

INTERNATIONAL DONOR STATISTICS

According to the International Registry of Organ Donation & Transplantation, Australia is currently ranked 17th in the world. Table 1 below lists the countries with a higher organ donation ranking. Spain, Belgium, France, Norway, and Italy all have “presumed consent” laws on organ donation, where everyone is considered a donor unless they specify otherwise. In contrast the USA and Finland practice an “opt in” consent law where their citizens provide express and informed agreement to donate organs and tissues in the event of their death. However, there are many other factors beside legislation which affects donor rates internationally, including hospital processes, public awareness, religion and culture, road death toll rates and many others. It is important to note that donation is still discussed with the family and the objections of next of kin are not overruled in Australia and all comparable countries, whether a presumed or informed consent model is in place.

Table 1
AUSTRALIAN DONOR STATISTICS
From 2002 – 2007 there has been fluctuation in the donor rates within each state. More often than not there is a correlating event in the state that highlights the need for organs, causing a spike in donation rates. Such events might include the donation of organs by the family of a well-known person, or publicity surrounding the Australian Transplant Games.

Table 2
There are also a number of factors that contribute to each state’s donation rate. These factors include having the drivers license system linked to the Australian Organ Donor Register (AODR) or sending out ADOR forms when a first-time driver obtains their license.

Advances in medical technology have meant an increase in the functioning longevity of transplanted organs. Table 3 below provides a clear comparison between deceased and live donors and the life of transplanted kidneys.

It is these advances that allow many recipients to return to their normal lives. And they are empowered with the knowledge that receiving an organ will not only provide a great quality of life but a more sustainable, long-term healthy future.

Currently in Australia, there are some transplant recipients who have had their transplanted organs longer than their native organs. It is important to remember that receiving an organ transplant is not a short term fix — it is a long term solution.
The need for donors in Canada

• **4,500** PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTS TODAY

• **2,124** ORGANS TRANSPLANTED (2012)

• **256** PEOPLE ON THOSE WAITLISTS DIED BEFORE RECEIVING TRANSPLANTS (2012)

**Did you know?**
You can donate certain organs and tissues while you’re still alive: a kidney, part of the liver, and a lobe of the lung.

We need many donors, but not enough Canadians have made plans to donate. In fact, our organ donation rates are lower than many other countries, including the United States. We can do better.

Facts about organ donation in Canada:

• Over 2,000 transplants were performed in 2012. This number has remained virtually unchanged since 2006.
• As our population ages, the need for organ and tissue donations will increase.
• Every year, too many people die waiting for an organ transplant.

Most Canadians waiting for an organ donor need new kidneys. Since kidney disease is on the rise in Canada, the need for donors is growing. In 2011, 256 people died waiting for a transplant – a third of them needed a kidney.

There are over 2,000 Canadians waiting for a cornea transplant. Depending on where you live, the wait for a new cornea (the clear front covering on the surface of the eye) could be up to three years. To learn more about organ and tissue donation and transplantation, visit [Canadian Blood Services](http://canadianbloodservices.ca). For residents of Quebec, learn about organ transplants at [TRANSPLANT QUEBEC](http://transplantquebec.ca), and learn about tissue transplants at [HEMA-QUEBEC](http://hemaquebec.ca).
Spain leads world in organ donations

The success of organ transplants in Spain is attributed mainly to the sensitive way transplant coordinators approach the bereaved families.

Organ tourism under attack
Spectacular rise in organ donors

Before Petra Lazaro-Carrasco Perez got a kidney transplant, the former secretary had to spend three hours a day, three days a week, attached to a dialysis machine at a Madrid hospital.

Holding a job became impossible and vacations were limited to places with a hospital nearby where she could have her blood pumped through the machine to remove the harmful wastes that her kidneys could no longer handle.

"It changes your life. It is like being born again," the 62-year-old said of the kidney transplant operation she underwent in 1997.

"You can't imagine the gratitude that I feel. I think about it every day and I am always moved. Sometimes I caress the spot where my kidney is, I really feel thankful to the family, to the kid who died," she added, her voice choked with emotion.

Perez is one of the beneficiaries of a network of transplant coordinators that began in 1989 and is now present in all 168 hospitals in Spain, helping make the country the world leader in organ donations.

Two organ donor applications

The system, depicted in the Oscar-winning movie All About My Mother by Spanish director Pedro Almodovar, identifies potential donors by closely monitoring emergency wards. When they learn of a death, the coordinators tactfully talk to the grieving families to get permission to harvest organs and help save the lives of others.

Spain led the world in organ donations in 2009 for the 18th consecutive year despite a sharp drop in road death fatalities, Health Minister Trinidad Jimenez announced earlier in January.

A total of 4,028 organ transplants were carried out in Spain from 1,605 donors in 2009, a new record for the country, said the health minister.

A total of 4,028 organ transplants were carried out in Spain from 1,605 donors in 2009, a new record for the country, said the health minister.

The number of deceased donors per million people -- a commonly used benchmark -- has increased in Spain from 14 in 1989 when the system was put in place to 34.3 in 2009, the highest rate in the world, according to the health ministry and the International Registry of Organ Donation and Transplantation.

By comparison, the rate for the entire 27-nation European Union was 18.2 in 2008 while in the United States, which pioneered organ transplant surgery, it stood at 26.3.

Italy and Portugal have followed suit, putting in place a similar system of transplant coordinators and their organ donation rates are also on the rise. Several other European nations, including Britain, are now considering doing likewise.

"You have to break the news of the death well, explain the details of the procedure well and really listen. And the family almost always agrees to donate," he said.
Transplant coordinators may spend hours listening to the relatives and asking them to consider organ donation in a private room away from the hospital wards.

A standard practice for transplant coordinators is to ask families what they think their relative would have wanted to happen.

Only about 15 percent of families approached in Spain refuse consent for organ donation, a huge drop from the 40 percent who refused in the 1980s. At a handful of hospitals the refusal rate is nearly zero percent.

The National Organisation of Transplants wants to bring the overall refusal rate in Spain down to 10 percent.

A single decision to donate can help four patients who need a kidney, lung, liver or heart.

An ambulance leaves the La Fe Hospital in Valencia on 28 April 2009. Spain leads Europe in organ donations thanks to teams of specially trained doctors who talk to relatives of the recently deceased to get their permission to harvest organs and help save the lives of others.

In March 2009, a record 32 transplants were carried out in a single day in Spain thanks to 13 donations, including a heart.

Under Spain's public health system, which is ranked the seventh best in the world by the World Health Organisation, organ transplants are carried out without cost to the patient. The recipient and the donor's family never meet; their only point of contact is the transplant co-ordinator.

But despite not knowing who the donor is, many recipients like Iluminada Martin-Crespo feel a long lasting connection to the person whose death gave them a new lease on life. She received a kidney transplant more than two decades ago when she was 23 years old. On the second anniversary of the death of the young man who was her donor, she gave birth to twins.

"I believe it is my gift to him," she said.

Spain is working in the European Union to boost organ donations across the bloc. Matesanz sees no reason why the Spanish system could not be copied with equal success in other countries.

"What is important is the way you approach the relatives, not the country you are in," he said.

The health ministry estimates that if the system in place in Spain was extended to the entire EU, the number of donors in the bloc could double to 18,000 from just under 9,000 in 2008. This could save or improve the lives of at least 20,000 more people each year, the ministry said.
What Spain can teach us about the gift of life
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A Spanish kidney specialist who turned that country into a world leader in organ and tissue donation believes he can do the same for Ontario’s transplant program.

Dr. Rafael Matesanz was in Toronto last week, learning about Ontario’s organ and tissue transplant system and sharing insights on how to improve it. He will prepare a blueprint report to help boost the provinces low rates of deceased donation and continue to advise as changes are implemented. A time frame has yet to be hammered out.

"I really believe now that we are on the right path and that Ontario will become a beacon of organ donation within a short period of time," says Dr. Gary Levy, who created the Multi-Organ Transplant Program at Toronto General Hospital. "We should be able to double and triple rates of deceased donation."

Levy created a jam-packed, two-day itinerary for Matesanz with meetings with everyone from Health Minister Deb Matthews to transplant nurses, doctors and volunteers with Trillium Gift of Life Network, the provincial agency mandated with organ and tissue donation and transplant. The trip was paid for by the hospital’s Birmingham Family Fund.

In an exclusive interview with the Star, Matesanz, 63, describes the Spanish Model as "the professionalization of organ donation."

Right now in Ontario to get a transplant a hospital must contact Trillium when a potential donor is available. Matesanz’s model, based on compassion and understanding, has trained specialists at every hospital.
The premise is that organ shortage is the failure to accurately identify potential donors, obtain the consent, and procure the organs.

"In many countries organ transplant is at the summit, but not much attention is paid to organ donation," Matesanz says. "We want a very active system, where you can change the person from dealing with tragedy. We are what we can say is proactive."

The model has four main components:

- A trained hospital coordination team.
- A transplant co-ordinator who obtains donation consent from the family and is switched out every three years to avoid burnout.
- A proactive referral method of possible donors to critical care units.
- The referral to and management of potential donors in the ICU.

The Spanish government addressed the donation issue in 1989, after a medical strike two years earlier sent rates plummeting 20 per cent. Matesanz was hired to improve the system. At the time, Spain had a rate of 14 donors per million citizens. About 1,000 kidney transplants a year were performed.

Matesanz began his work looking at his own hospital and noticed patterns.

"It was very dependent on the person who was on duty," he says. "There were some of my colleagues who always got the organ and some who never got the organ. It was very person-dependent, not (donor) family-dependent."

He realized the most successful colleagues were specially trained critical-care specialists.

"It was very clear for me we should establish professional transplant co-ordinators, who should be an intensivist," Matesanz says. Physicians or nurses already working in the intensive care unit were ideal.

"We started with this philosophy and just in two or three years, we went from (being low) ranked in Europe to first in the world," he says.

Spain now has a donor rate approaching 35 per million, and performs 2,600 kidney transplants a year. Many Ontarians wait up to 10 years for a kidney; in Spain the average wait is less than eight months.

Fewer than 1 per cent of donated organs in Spain come from live donors, whereas in Ontario last year 50 per cent of organ transplants were from live donors. Ontario’s deceased donor rate is less than 19 per million.

The Spanish transplant system operates under presumed consent, which means everyone is considered a donor unless they opt out, says Ronnie Gavsie, the CEO of TGLN. Many countries have that system in place, and there have been calls to adopt it here, she adds.

While proponents believe that sways more families to agree to donate, Matesanz is adamant presumed consent bears no influence on donation rates, Gavsie says. It was introduced in Spain 10 years before Matesanz was hired.

Success is largely about approach.

"(The key is to) have a very good trained doctor, who can detect every potential donor and then approach the family," says Matesanz. "At the end, the results are good."

Most countries in southern Europe have adopted principles of the Spanish Model, as has much of Latin America. Northern Europe is similar to Canada, which has a “wait and see what happens” philosophy, dependent on a generosity, Matesanz says. It’s more passive than active.

"I’m sorry, but this is not (effective)," he says. "The goal is to get organ donors."

In Britain 40 per cent of families who are approached to donate a loved one’s organs refuse, Matesanz says. But in a study of 200 cases of British tourists who suffered catastrophic accidents in Spain, fewer than 9 per cent refused.

"So something different is happening," he says. "It’s not putting pressure on the family. What we’re doing is learning the best approach. We analyzed and compared what methodologies have the most consent."

Gavsie believes Matesanz can be influential in improving the odds for the 1,500 Ontarians awaiting a life-saving organ transplant. “He actually has the empirical proof, because they have tried various approaches and have found what works and what doesn’t,” she says.

Letting the family speak, while the co-ordinator listens, turns out to be a crucial factor. "If you take the time, you get empathy with the family and finally, in many cases, it’s the family who offers you the organs," Matesanz says.

Organ donation is now widely viewed as an opportunity in Spain. "It’s not an obligation, it’s a right," he says.
Spaniards accept that organ and tissue donation benefits everyone, because anyone can find themselves on the waiting list at any time. "It's a source of national pride," Matesanz says. "We are very proud to contribute to the system."