

Muslims, Organ Donation and Transplantation

Source: Muslim Life Planning Institute, Eversight and Gift of Life Michigan

TRANSPLANTABLE ORGAN CRISIS

- The need for transplantable organs in the United States is at a crisis level. As of March 2020, there are more than 112,000 candidates for transplant on the U.S. national waiting list. While 2019 saw a record 19,252 organ donors (11,871 were deceased donors, and 7,381 were living donors), the need still exceeds the supply of transplantable organs.
- Twenty people die each day waiting for a transplant.
- Nearly 67,000 people (59 percent) on the national waiting list are black, Asian, and other ethnic minorities. Many of these black, Asian or ethnic minorities self-identify as Muslims, especially in communities with large African-American Muslim and immigrant Muslim populations.
- Although many ethnic minority patients can receive a transplant from a white donor, blood and tissue types need to match for a successful transplant. For many, the best match will come from a donor from the same ethnic background.
- More donors from black, Asian, and other minority ethnic groups are urgently needed to address an increase in patients from the same communities dying while waiting for an organ transplant. About 65.6% of deceased donors are white, blacks make up 15.1%, and Hispanics 14.9%. Only 2.7% of deceased donors are Asian and 1% multiracial. Other ethnic minorities make up less than 1% of the donors.

CORNEAL TISSUE SHORTAGE

- Corneal blindness is a significant cause of preventable blindness worldwide. More than 10 million people are in need.
- Globally, there is an extreme shortage of donated corneas for transplantation. Many patients suffer avoidable blindness for years while awaiting their chance for restored sight.
- Corneal transplant surgery is the most frequently performed type of transplant and can benefit patients by restoring their eyesight.
- These transplants are possible only when people donate corneas.



BARRIERS TO DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION FOR MUSLIMS

- Many American Muslims are reluctant to donate organs for several reasons. Some are uncertain regarding permissibility; others question if medical, donation and transplantation professionals have the competency to handle their loved one's body in an Islamically appropriate manner.
- Some members of the religious community do not have adequate information to provide needed guidance to Muslims regarding donation.
- A lack of multicultural competency in the medical, donation and transplant communities, along with the lack of understanding of the importance that family dynamics play in the Islamic culture, also can lead to lower numbers in Muslim organ and tissue donation.
- Some hold the mistaken belief that Muslims do not believe in donating organs, and therefore avoid asking.
- Some transplant community members admit that they don't have the confidence or religious competency to engage with Muslim families effectively.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

- Discuss and request donation in a culturally competent manner.
- Assure Muslims that their loved one's body is handled appropriately.
- Have available resources to help Muslims make informed choices about donating.
- Provide culturally appropriate post-donation grief counseling for Muslims.



Muslim Life Planning Institute (MLPI) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to establish pathways to lifelong learning and healthy communities at the local, national, and global levels.



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Eversight is a nonprofit organization based in Ann Arbor with a mission to restore sight and prevent blindness through the healing power of donation, transplantation and research.