

October 2013

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION



A JAIN PERSPECTIVE

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Organ and Tissue Donation - A Jain Perspective

What is organ donation?

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. It is an operation, which involves removing organs and tissue from a donor and transplanting them into someone who, in many cases, is very ill or dying. The donation can save the life or significantly improve the quality of the life of the recipient.

What organs can I donate?

Currently, donors can gift the following organs: kidneys, heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, and small bowel. However, just as importantly, tissue can be donated too. This includes: corneas, heart valves, bone, skin, tendons and cartilage. While most organ donations come from people who have died, in some cases living donors may give one of their kidneys or part of their liver to a recipient.

Why do the Jain communities face a specific challenge when it comes to organ donation?

We face two main challenges. The first is that around 7,256 people currently on the UK Active Transplant Waiting List, over 1,793 are from Asian or Black background. Most of these are waiting for a kidney transplant. Kidneys fail for a number of reasons, but a very large proportion of them fail as a result of high blood pressure and diabetes. Unfortunately high blood pressure and diabetes are much more prevalent in the Asian

communities. Secondly, though there are about 35,000 Jains living in UK, we do not have enough registered on the NHS Organ Donor Register to meet our needs. There are over 19.8 million people registered on the NHS Organ Donor Register, but only 1.5% of these potential donors (where ethnicity is available) are from an Asian background. Organs from people within the same ethnic group are likely to be more suitable. This means that patients from an Asian or Black background have to wait longer for a transplant.

What can I do to help?

It is simple to help change these statistics and to potentially save the lives. Firstly, you can help to do this today by placing your name on the NHS Organ Donor Register. This is a very simple and quick process and details of how to do this are on the back of this leaflet. Secondly, you can discuss organ donation with your family and friends, so that they can carry out your donation wishes. Finally, you can raise this issue within your community. We should aim for organ donation to be the norm rather than an exception among Jains in this country.

Does organ donation affect Jain funeral and cremation practices?

The body is treated with the utmost respect during the organ and tissue donation process. The family will be able to hold traditional funeral practices after the donation process has occurred.

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Does organ donation have an impact on the soul going to the next life?

No. Jains believe that Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life. Also the soul and the body are two separate entities, organ donation does not impact the soul in the next life.

How does the Jain perspective affect organ and tissue donation?

There are a variety of ways in which Jainism impacts the perceptions of organ donation.

- One aspect to consider is the practice of dana (laukika- dāna). This act of selfless giving is significant when you choose to save a person's life by donating organs and tissues.
- Most Jains believe that when the soul has departed at the time of death, the body is then separated from its earthly purpose. The soul and the physical body are two separate entities, and it is only the soul that is eternal, therefore we should not be possessive of our physical body. The donated organ is no longer linked to donor's soul and is also separate from the rest of the body.
- According to the first principles of Jaina ontology a dead body is worthless and can be disposed of according to ones wishes or wishes of the family members.
- Jainism does not discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, class or religion.

In Jainism, compassion and charity are considered two major virtues. Organ donation has been widely supported by the Jain community leaders and monks. In addition, we believe in the concept of the "Live and Let Live".

Will my family be involved in the decision to donate my organs after my death?

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know that some good has come from their loss.

What will happen if recipient of the donated organ is not a Jain?

Organs donated after deaths are allocated to the person on the Transplant Waiting List who is best matched to the donated organ. Priority is given to patients who most urgently need a transplant. This matching process does not consider the donor or the potential recipient's faith.

What is the process for removing organs donated after death?

Organ removal is managed with the utmost respect and dignity by a team of donation and transplant specialists. The donor's immediate relatives are kept well informed and are given support throughout the whole process by

specially trained hospital staff. As soon as the removal process is complete, the patient's body is available to the family, so that religious and cremation arrangements can be made.

Can anyone register their wish to become an organ donor?

Yes. Anyone may add their name to the NHS Organ Donor Register. Everyone is a potential organ and tissue donor, regardless of his or her age or health.

Let us come together and show our compassion for those in need. Let's say, "YES" to organ and tissue donation and, as a result, more lives will be saved!

"Whether organ donation is interpreted as a social gift (laukika-dāna) or as a religious gift (dharmika-dāna) in the Jaina tradition, it is clear that the dead body devoid of the soul has no religious value according to the Jaina scriptures and hence can be disposed of according to the wishes of the deceased."

Dr. Peter Flügel

Chair, Centre of Jaina Studies
Department of the Study of Religions
School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London.



0300 123 23 23
organdonation.nhs.uk



For more information on kidneys, or kidney disease, please call the **National Kidney Federation Helpline on 0845 601 02 09** Or go to: www.kidney.org.uk

"The person who gave me the gift of life, is my hero. I literally owe my life to the family, who had the bravery and strength to allow this procedure to take place in the midst of their grief. Transplantation really is life changing and I would urge people to join today and talk their decision over with their loved ones." says

Mrs. Vasanti Shah, Manchester

"I am so proud of my husband Ashutosh, who as an organ donor saved many lives. He was a charitable, compassionate and loving person even in his death."

Mrs. Manisha Doshi

"I had no hesitation in donating my kidney to my husband. Life for him would not have been anywhere near as good without the transplant. I have been fit and healthy to the day after the transplant. I also plan to donate all of my organs after my death. I believe that the body is of no use to me or my family after I die, Hence if I can save a few lives after passing away what more can I ask?" – Mrs. Meena Modi, Kidney Donor

LET US ALL WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A GIFT OF LIFE POSSIBLE

How do I become a donor?

If you decide you would like to become a donor on your death, you need to join the NHS Organ Donor Register to ensure your wishes are recorded. Discuss your decision with those closest to you so that they are aware of your wishes. Adding your name to the register is simple and quick.

• You can register online at **organdonation.nhs.uk**

• Call **0300 123 23 23**

To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit organdonation.nhs.uk