



EDITORIAL

Adolescents who Promote Family Discussion about Organ Donation may Influence Kidney Donation Rate

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PUBLISHED

30 November 2024

CITATION

Trompeta, JA., 2024. Adolescents who Promote Family Discussion about Organ Donation may Influence Kidney Donation Rate. Medical Research Archives, [online] 12(11).

<https://doi.org/10.18103/mra.v12i11.5968>

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.18103/mra.v12i11.5968>

ISSN

2375-1924

Introduction

Asian adolescents are the focus of program development to build awareness of organ donation and the concept of brain death. Their understanding and attitudes towards organ donation and transplantation are pivotal, as they can initiate and engage in family discussions about this critical topic.¹

Asian Americans have among the most extended waiting times for kidney transplants in the United States.² In 2020, Asian Americans donated 2.3% of deceased organs and 4.5% of living organs, the lowest rate of any racial group in the US.³ Reluctance of Asian Americans to discuss organ donation within the family has been widely documented.⁴⁻⁶ This reluctance is rooted in cultural aspects such as taboos related to discussing death, which often stem from a fear of bringing bad luck or inviting death, and religious beliefs that may conflict with the concept of brain death and organ donation.⁷ In Japan, the number of deceased donations remains markedly lower than that of many other countries,⁸ partly due to the current brain death law, which is being revised to address cultural and ethical concerns.⁹

High school students face the initial decision about being an organ donor when obtaining their driver's license. This decision may be challenging if they have no prior knowledge about organ donation or have not discussed the topic with their family. Fewer than half of people willing to be organ donors discuss their wishes with family members.¹⁰ Asian American adolescents with approving

or positive attitudes were likely to engage in family discussions about organ donation.¹ A positive relationship between greater knowledge and willingness to donate has been widely documented.^{1, 11-14}

High school-based health education programs have shown significant promise in improving knowledge about organ donation,¹⁵⁻¹⁷ particularly among Asian adolescents who are at risk for diabetes, hypertension, and childhood obesity.¹⁸ Type 2 diabetes mellitus is emerging as a new clinical problem within pediatric practice,¹⁹ and higher blood pressure (BP) levels in children are associated with an increased risk for hypertension and subclinical cardiovascular disease in adulthood.²⁰ Eliminating overweight and obesity could reduce 14.4% of high BP in children.²¹ If implemented effectively, these programs can improve organ donation knowledge and be a powerful tool in preventing unhealthy diets and promoting physical activity, thereby contributing to a healthier future.

Conclusion

Asian adolescents often play a crucial role in helping elders access and understand healthcare and influencing the decision regarding organ donation.²² Organ donation education is needed in high schools to reinforce and maintain high levels of knowledge and positive attitudes; therefore, promoting family discussions that are important for increasing organ donation and transplantation rates.

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