



The organ donor foundation



Tell: (021) 426 0198
Fax: (021) 426 0197
Email info@odf.org.za

Po Box 2349
Cape Town
8000

Registration No. 003-458-NPO
Fundraising No. 08 800699 0002
Section 18A tax status
PBO Reference No. 18/11/13/4

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

1 August 2021

INTRODUCTION TO PRESS RELEASE - ORGAN & TISSUE DONOR MONTH

It is not often that the entire world experiences a dramatic event that affects us all, but it's a tremendous privilege when we find ourselves in a position to make a difference. You are one of those people who can make a difference and we are calling out to you to help us put into place a plan of action that will take hardly any effort, but will result in long lasting outcomes that we can all be proud of.

We all feel disempowered when something takes control of our lives, something that scares us, leading to feelings of immobilization. However, in a crisis there is always something that we can do to make a difference.

This is about the many unfortunate patients who right now need a transplant and who will surely die if a suitable donor is not found, but there is hope for this person - and that hope is us - who can immediately do something about it.

Please see attached the press release, which is the key to our plan of action.

Fond regards

Executive Director Operations

Executive Director Business Development

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

Board: Dr. Otto Thaning (Chairperson), Mrs Samantha Nicholls (Executive Director Operations), Mr. Jooste Vermeulen (Executive Director Business Development), Mr. Saul Berman, Dr. Julian Jacobs, Prof. Alp Numanoglu, Mrs. Shelley Mackay-Davidson, Prof. Heinz Rode, Mr. Peter Roseveare.

PRESS RELEASE

"The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on the transplant health care system was abrupt, profound and unprecedented."

Rebecca R. Goff, PhD

IMPACT: COVID-19 ON TRANSPLANTATION

90,6% reduction in deceased donor transplants in France while in South Africa live related donor transplants have come to a complete standstill.

Resulting in waiting lists being dramatically increased.

COVID-19 had an immediate and devastating impact on transplant activity as the infection became more widespread throughout the world with South Africa being the most severely affected in Africa.

The overall reduction in deceased donor transplantations since the COVID-19 outbreak was 90.6% in France and 51.1% in the USA and although the exact numbers are not yet verified for South Africa, one can easily deduce that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted transplantation more devastatingly than developed countries.

Successful organ donation relies on many factors that have to fall into place. Donor hospitals have to make a timely referral of potential donors to organ procurement officers, who in turn, need to coordinate with intensive care units (ICUs) to undertake the necessary testing and screening measures to exclude SARS-CoV-2 and pneumonitis caused by the virus.

To complicate matters, due to the high number of COVID-19 patients being admitted has led to hospital bed, ventilator and staffing shortages with many doctors and nurses being reassigned to COVID wards making it almost impossible to realize a potential organ procurement. An even more devastating factor is a result of hospital visitor restrictions where family members cannot be present at the

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

hospital, which poses a significant barrier to obtaining timely donation consent from the next of kin.

These many hurdles have led to Healthcare providers and leaders of medical institutions needing to make difficult decisions about how best to deploy limited medical resources. These choices could be especially devastating for the thousands of patients in need of an organ transplant.

In South Africa, there is still capacity for transplant services, but it has been significantly limited by a lack of deceased donor referrals. To compound the crisis, living elective donations, which make up 50% of all transplants performed have been paused at some centres and carried out on a risk assessment basis at other centres due to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed. Thus, not only have half the transplants that would normally be carried out, decreased significantly, but it also has become incredibly difficult for deceased donations to take place. However, deceased transplantation will continue to take place in facilities that have sufficient staff and the infrastructure available.

In summary, successful transplantation is a complex process that is reliant on many factors that have been severely challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

END

How the media can make a difference.

The media can help address this crisis by following the formula below.

PROBLEM

A sharp increase in deaths of patients needing an urgent transplant was caused by the impact of COVID-19 in South Africa.

Due to the high risk of COVID-19 infection, all live/elective transplants in South Africa were paused. Elective transplants make up 50% of the total number of transplants performed in South Africa each year. However, these patients still qualify for deceased donor transplants. Sadly, deceased donor transplants have also dramatically declined as a result of the infectious nature of COVID-19 and the impact it has on specialist services, such as ICUs.

Both live and deceased donor transplants have been severely affected creating a compounded negative outcome for patients needing urgent transplants who will die if not immediately helped.

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

SOLUTION

In South Africa, organ & tissue donor consent is already difficult to obtain because people do not feel comfortable saying yes to consent. With an intensified call to action and a collective effort by the media to mobilize South Africans to not only register as organ & tissue donors but to also rally them to ask their friends and family to register too. We, the Organ Donor Foundation have in the past seen an increase in organ & tissue donor consent as a result of aggressive media drives. We, therefore, know that we can - without any doubt - save the lives of patients waiting for urgent transplants and those whose life would be drastically improved through tissue donation.

The more people who register and talk to their families, the more people will be saved.

The media can immediately play a crucial role in saving and improving the lives of patients urgently waiting for an organ or tissue transplant.

CALL TO ACTION

It is our collective responsibility to mobilize South Africans to urgently register as organ & tissue donors. More registrations equal more lives being saved and more lives being improved. It is an easy message that can be easily repeated every day on every program for the month of August.

This is a crisis that can be addressed and it is our social duty to act today and to continue acting for the month of August to help save lives that would otherwise be needlessly lost.

How the public can make a difference.

For a transplant to take place, a donor is needed who has a matching blood type, plus meets a range of criteria such as tissue typing and antibody cross-matching, which all has to match to a recipient. This is a complex process and can often disqualify a potential donor if a matching recipient cannot be found. It is, therefore

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

- in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic - critical that the pool of available donors is bigger to increase the chance for a suitable match.

Now, more than ever, South Africans need to register as organ & tissue donors to increase the opportunity for transplantation. More registered organ & tissue donors will help alleviate the unusual pressure being placed by COVID-19 on transplantation.

It is easy to register as an organ & tissue donor. Simply visit www.odf.org.za. **Save a life today!**

Interviewing patients who received or are waiting for a transplant.

We know it is a great idea to interview patients to share their transplant experience, however, COVID-19 turned everything upside down and we need to get as many people as possible to register as organ & tissue donors. From experience we've seen that driving organ & tissue donor registrations results in a dramatic increase in transplants performed. Our appeal to you is to follow our formula and interview the designated persons indicated on the list below.

The questions we would prefer you to ask us.

What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the number of transplants performed?

The number of transplants performed dramatically decreased and as a result, many patients waiting for a transplant died. **Many live-related donations were paused.** There has been more than a **50% reduction of deceased donors** since the COVID-19 outbreak. The reality is that this equates to a 75% compounded reduction.

What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the transplant waiting list?

First of all, the number of **patients waiting dramatically increased**, as those on the list did not receive a transplant, making way for new patients to be placed on the list. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the number of transplants that could be performed and thus with fewer transplants taking place, patients desperately waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant will **wait longer with many dying in the interim.**

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

If someone passes away due to COVID-19 can their organs be donated?

No, if a person dies while actively infected by COVID-19 their **organs will not be viable to be donated.**

If someone passes away due to COVID-19 can their tissue be donated?

No, None of the SA Tissue Banks currently accept tissue from donors who passed away due to COVID-19 related conditions.

How long after having recovered from COVID-19 may one donate organs or tissue?

As with all deceased donations that are not COVID-19 related, at the time of death **tests will be carried out by medical professionals** to determine if the organs and tissue are **suitable for donation.**

Will the COVID vaccine impact the ability to donate organs or tissue; is there a suggested/preferred waiting period?

Each case would be judged by medical professionals to determine viability based on test results and medical circumstances.

Has COVID-19 severely impacted the number of ICU beds available for transplantation?

Yes, and more so during the peak of the pandemic. Recipients, immediately after the transplantation, recover in ICU and this is not possible if there are no ICU beds available.

What makes the procurement of organs difficult during COVID-19?

There is limited access to hospitals making it virtually impossible for medical professionals to refer potential donors and obtain consent. This is due to the **restrictive nature of isolation and protective protocol** that the COVID-19 pandemic placed on medical facilities.

Has the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted tissue donation?

Yes! During the peak of the wave, hospitals redirect all their resources to the COVID wards resulting in elective surgeries being paused, this in turn affects tissue donation. An example would be hip replacement surgery where the patient could have donated the femoral head.

What will increase the number of transplants during COVID-19?

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

The **larger the number of donors available**, the greater the chance, that a suitable match will be found. It is therefore essential that more people say yes to organ transplantation to make it easier for recipients to find a match.

It is also equally important to increase the number of tissue donations in order to improve the lives of patients needing a tissue transplant.

Can public participation improve the number of lifesaving transplants during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes, the **more people that register** and rally their friends and family to register will in turn lead to an **increase in the number of donors**.

What responsibilities does a registered organ & tissue donor have?

During COVID-19 **it is our civil duty** as registered organ & tissue donors **to mobilize everyone we know to register as organ & tissue donors**. This will in turn increase the number of transplants.

Should my family know about my wish to be an organ & tissue donor?

All registered organ & tissue donors have a responsibility of making sure that their family knows of their commitment to being an organ & tissue donor as there is a direct correlation between knowing a loved one's wishes to saying yes to consent.

What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the number of people registering as donors?

The COVID-19 pandemic has not negatively influenced the number of people registering as donors. The number of registrations has remained constant and increased during some periods.

For interviews

Contact **Julie Purkis - Liaison Officer** who will coordinate all interviews.

Cell 072 233 9345

email julie@odf.org.za

Sources:

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & tissue donor

Impact of COVID-19 in solid organ transplant recipients

Lara Danziger-Isakov, Emily A. Blumberg, Oriol Manuel, Martina Sester, Alexandre Loupy, Olivier Aubert, Peter P Reese, Olivier Bastien, Florian Bayer, Christian Jacqueline

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on transplantation

E Steynl, II; S Al-Bennalll S. Afr. j. surg. vol.58 n.3 Cape Town Sep. 2020

The Impact of COVID-19 on Organ Donation, Procurement, and Liver Transplantation in the United States

Jonathan Merola, Michael L. Schilsky, David C. Mulligan

The Impact of COVID-19 on Solid Organ Donation: The North Italy Transplant Program Experience

Antonino Cannavò Serena, Maria Passamonti, Daniela Martinuzzi, Antonio Longobardi, Andrea Fiorattini, Nicoletta Margherita, Troni Martha, Helena Esposito, Nicolina Dell'orefice, Rosanna Torelli, Tullia Maria De Feo

Unità Operativa Complessa (UOC) Coordinamento Trapianti, Fondazione Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico (IRCCS) Ca' Granda-Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy

Tell your family today

I'm proud 2b an organ & fissue donor