

Religious Rulings

RELIGIOUS RULINGS

Amish

Discussion The Amish will consent to transplantation if they believe it is for the well-being of the transplant recipient. The Amish are reluctant however, to donate their organs if the transplant outcomes are questionable. John Holster, authority on Amish religion and Professor of Anthropology at Temple University in Philadelphia, says in his book, Amish Society, "The Amish believe that since God created the human body, it is God who heals it. However, nothing in the Amish understanding of the Bible forbids the use of modern medical services, including surgery, hospitalisation, blood transfusions etc.

Anglican

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion The offering of life to and for others reflects the Christian principle of interdependence within the human community. The role of hospital Chaplains as members of the professional team is vital in the maintenance of the spiritual and human dimensions of the organ transplant process.

Australian Aboriginal

Discussion

A single statement cannot be given as the Aboriginal population is made up of a number of individual communities.

Baha'i Faith

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion There is nothing in the Baha'i teaching which forbids donation. The guardian of the Baha'i faith has stated "..... it seems a noble thing to do".

Baptists

Donation Acceptable

Brethren

Discussion

The Church of the Brethren's Annual Conference in 1993 developed a resolution on organ and tissue donation, supporting and encouraging donation. They wrote that, "We have the opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs and tissues".

Buddhism

Donation This is a matter of individual choice

Transplantation Buddhist teaching on the middle path i.e. the avoiding of extremes may be applicable to these points. What is medicine to one may be poison to another. Buddhists believe that organ/tissue donation is a matter of individual conscience and place high value on acts of compassion. Reverend Gyomay Masao, president and founder of the Buddhist temple of Chicago, says: "We honour those who donate their bodies and organs to the advancement of medical science and to saving lives".

The importance of letting loved ones know your wishes is stressed. Many families will not give permission to donate unless they know their loved one wanted to be a donor.

Discussion The Theravadan Buddhists believe organ donation is a matter of individual conscience. The Mahayanist Buddhists believe that even though one has stopped breathing at the time of death, consciousness may remain in the body for up to three years, depending on the individual's karma. If however, one is involved in a fatal car accident, then they believe that consciousness abruptly and instantly leaves the body at the time of death.

Catholic Church

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion "Transplantation presupposes a prior, explicit, free and conscious decision on the part of the donor, generally the closest relatives. It is a decision to offer, without reward, a part of one's own body for the health and well being of another person. We should rejoice that medicine, in its service of life has

found in organ transplantation a new way of serving the human family". (Pope John Paul II in an address to the Society of Organ Sharing, Rome, 20 June, 1991.)

Christian Scientists

Donation Individual Decision

Transplantation Individual Decision

Discussion The Church of Christ Scientist doesn't have a specific position regarding organ donation. Christian Scientists rely on spiritual instead of medical means of healing. They are free however, to choose whatever medical form of treatment they desire – including transplantation. Organ and tissue donation is an individual decision.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (Mormons)

Donation Individual Decision

Transplantation Individual Decision

Discussion The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' made the following policy statement on June 3, 1974. "The question of whether one should will bodily organs to be used as transplants or for research after death must be answered from deep within the conscience of the individual involved. Those who seek counsel from the church on this subject are encouraged to review the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, to implore the Lord for inspiration and guidance, and then to take the course of action which should give a feeling of peace and comfort."

Episcopal

Discussion The Episcopal Church passed a resolution in 1982 that recognises the life-giving benefits of organ, blood and tissue donation. All Christians are encouraged to become organ, blood and tissue donors "as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave His life that we may have life in its fullness".

Greek Orthodox Church

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion The Greek Orthodox Church has no objection, whether doctrinal or moral, to the transplantation of organs on medical advice. The reception and donation of organs for this purpose reveal a profound act of loving solidarity and sacrifice among human persons. It is for this reason that the

utmost care and respect should be shown at all times and at every phase of this service.

Gypsies

Donation Generally opposed

Transplantation Generally opposed

Discussion Gypsies believe that for one year after a person dies, the soul retraces its steps. All of the parts of the body must be intact because the soul maintains a physical shape.

Hinduism

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion The Hindu religion is based on the "Law of Karma" and reincarnation. The soul lives forever, is immortal and gets reborn in a new physical forms. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that part of the dead human body, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans. This act is an individual decision. H.L Trivedi, in Transplantation Proceedings, stated that, "Hindu mythology has stories in which the parts of the human body are used for the benefit of other humans and society. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that parts of humans, dead or alive, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans".

Islam

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion In 1983, The Muslim Religious Council initially rejected organ donation by followers of Islam, but it has reversed its position, provided donors consent in writing prior to death. The organs of Muslim donors must be transplanted immediately.

The religion strongly believes in the principle of saving human life. The majority of Muslim scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic Law have invoked the principle of priority of saving lives and have permitted the organ transplant as a necessity to procure that noble end.

Jehovah's Witness

Donation Individual decision

Transplantation Individual decision

Discussion According to the Watch Tower Society, the legal corporation for the religion, Jehovah's Witness do not encourage organ donation, but believe it is a

matter for individual conscience. Although the group is often assumed to ban transplantation because of its taboo against blood transfusion, it does not oppose donating or receiving organs. All organs and tissues, however, must be completely drained of blood before transplantation.

Judaism

Donation Individual Decision

Transplantation Individual Decision

Discussion All four branches of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist) support and encourage donation. According to Orthodox Rabbi Moses Tedler, chairman of the Bioethics Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America, "If one is in the position to donate an organ to save another life, it's obligatory to do so, even if the donor never knows who the beneficiary will be."

The basic principle of Jewish ethics - "the infinite worth of the human being" - also includes donation of corneas, since eyesight restoration is considered a life-saving operation. In 1991, the Rabbinical Council (Orthodox) approved organ donations as permissible, even required, from brain-dead patients. Both the Reform and Conservative movements also have policy statements strongly supporting donation.

Given the complicated issue, and the number of factors that need to be taken into account, it would always be advisable for the parties involved to speak to their Rabbi if circumstances permit.

Lutheran Church

Discussion

The Lutheran Church does not oppose organ or tissue donation. The Lutheran Church believes that the decision to donate one's organs and/or tissues should be left up to the individual.

Maori

Donation Individual decision

Transplantation Individual decision

Discussion Maori people must be treated as individuals. Some will think traditionally, others will reject tradition, but the majority will lie somewhere in between. The most important consideration is that full discussion and consultation be carried out with the family and members of their land.

Protestant

Discussion

Protestants encourage and endorse organ donation. The Protestant faith respects an individual's conscience and a person's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body. Rev James W Rassbach of the Board of Communication Services, Missouri-Synod, says: "We accept and believe that our Lord Jesus Christ came to give life and came to give it in abundance. Organ donations enable more abundant life, alleviate pain and suffering and are an expression of love in times of tragedy."

Pentecostal

Discussion

Pentecostals believe that the decision to donate one's organs and tissues donation should be left up to the individual.

Presbyterian Church

Discussion

Presbyterians encourage and support donation. They respect a person's right to make decisions regarding their own body. During their General Assembly in 1995, they wrote strong support of donation and commented that they "encourage its members and friends to sign and carry universal donor cards...."

Reformed Church of Australia

Donation Acceptable except in dependant minors

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion There are no biblical or principle objections to donation and transplantation for therapeutic purposes.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Salvation Army

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion It is essential that the rights of all individuals are respected and that free and informed consent be obtained from the next of kin. The giving of human organs makes possible a richer life and the alleviation of others' suffering.

Seventh Day Adventist Church

Donation Individual decision

Transplantation Individual decision

Discussion Although transplant procedures are carried out at many Seventh Day Adventist health care institutions around the world, the church has made no formal declaration regarding organ donation and transplantation.

Shinto

Donation Not acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable to some

Discussion In Shinto, the dead body is considered to be impure and dangerous, and thus quite powerful.

"In folk belief context, injuring a dead body is a serious crime..." according to E. Namihira in his article, 'Shinto Concept Concerning the Dead Human Body'.

"...To this day it is difficult to obtain consent from bereaved families for organ donation...the Japanese regard it in the sense of injuring a dead body." Families are often concerned that they not injure the itia - the relationship between the dead person and the bereaved people. For this reason organ donation is often considered unacceptable by the Shinto religion.

Unitarian Universalist

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion When the patient and physicians believe that such operations will be beneficial to the patient and when the donor is not harmed, the church affirms that guidance.

Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of Victoria)

Donation Acceptable

Transplantation Acceptable

Discussion The church recommends that members be encouraged to volunteer to become organ donors and that those who are willing to become organ donors take appropriate action to make their wishes known. Most important of all is to have frank and specific discussions within the family, so that other members of the family, specifically next of kin, understand the wishes of the person or persons concerned and are prepared to see these wishes carried out when the opportunity arises. Action should be taken to make these wishes known in some durable written format.

Wesleyan Church

Discussion

The Wesleyan Church supports donation as a way of helping others. It believes that God's "ability to resurrect us is not dependent on whether or not all our parts were connected at death." It also supports research and in 1989 noted in a task force on public morals and social concerns that "one of the ways that a Christian can do good is to request that their body be donated to a medical school for use in teaching".