

For discussion on
10 November 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services New Campaign to Promote Organ Donation

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the launch of a new campaign to further promote organ donation amongst the public and enhance the recognition of organ donation as a charitable act to save the lives of others.

Current Situation of Organ Donation

2. End-stage organ failure often results from many common chronic diseases in Hong Kong when the conditions of the patients become more serious. For these patients, apart from certain life-sustaining treatments, organ transplant is often the only means of life-saving treatment. Cadaveric organs are the main source of organs in organ transplant. Transplant from living persons is also practiced usually amongst close relatives.

3. A key to cadaveric organ donation is the willingness of family members to donate the organs of the deceased, which is understandably a difficult decision for them to make on behalf of the deceased when they are still suffering from the loss of their loved ones. Their decision in turn often depends on the wish of the deceased to donate organs after death and whether the family members are made aware of their wish.

4. According to the Hospital Authority (HA), about 54% of the families of the deceased approached by the Transplant Co-ordinators of HA refused to consent to organ donation. About half of them cited the reason that they were not aware of the wish of the deceased to donate organs. On the other hand, in cases where the deceased had made known their wish to donate organs, the family members would usually respect their wish.

5. The number of organ / tissue donation in hospitals under HA, and the number of patients waiting for transplant are at **Annex**. As at end-2007, some 1 600 patients were waiting for transplant of kidney and liver. Meanwhile, the number of donated cadaveric kidney and liver, though gradually increasing from 2003 to 2007, was only around 80 in 2007. Promoting organ

donation is thus essential to saving the lives of these patients.

Registering Wish of Organ Donation

6. At present, an individual who wishes to donate his/her organ(s) after death for transplant purposes may record the wish by signing and carrying an organ donation card. Building on the experience of the Organ Donation Register set up by the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) to store the consent of some 40 000 prospective donors, the Department of Health (DH) has been developing a Centralised Organ Donation Register (CODR) in collaboration with HKMA to provide an easily accessible means for individuals to voluntarily register their wish to donate organs after death. We have briefed this Panel on the operation of the CODR at the meeting of 12 February 2007. HKMA is seeking consent of the registrants of its Organ Donation Register to transfer their data to the CODR.

7. The CODR is now planned to be launched on 24 November 2008. A person who wishes to donate organs after death may register in the CODR online at <http://www.organdonation.gov.hk> or by mail or fax. Registration forms will be available at public and private hospitals, Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Donation Centres, Health Centres of DH, premises of HKMA, tertiary academic institutions, various non-government organisations (NGOs) and private companies. We will also in conjunction with the launch of CODR arrange a series of promotional activities (see next section).

8. Even with the CODR, signing and carrying organ donation cards would remain an option for individuals to express their wish, but the CODR would provide the added benefits that their wish would be readily accessible to Transplant Coordinators at the critical moment. Either way, the most important thing is for the individuals to make their wish known to their family members. It is never too early to share one's wish for organ donation after death with family members and have that wish recorded.

New Campaign to Promote Organ Donation

9. Given the importance of individuals' and family members' acceptance, the main objective of promoting organ donation is to enhance the willingness of individuals to donate their organs after death, and to make known their wish not least to their family members. We also aim to enhance the understanding of the community towards organ donation as a charitable life-saving act, thereby lessening hesitation or reluctance of individuals and

family members about organ donation. The ultimate goal is to create an atmosphere in society which recognizes voluntary organ donation as something commendable and should be the norm rather than the exception.

10. To this end, DH in collaboration with HA and relevant NGOs will roll out an organ donation promotion campaign with a series of promotional activities over the next 12 months in the community with a view to enhancing public acceptance of and promoting action for organ donation. The main strategy for the new promotion campaign is to instil actions in the community through engaging community leaders and different sectors of society so as to garner their support and through them reach out to the public.

11. The “World’s Biggest Walk” co-organized by the Hong Kong Society of Transplant, Hong Kong Society of Nephrology, HKMA, DH, HA and other relevant organizations on 25 October 2008 marked a worldwide effort to promote support for organ donation. The next milestone activity is the launch of the CODR on 24 November 2008. The launch will be followed by a series of activities staggered over the next 12 months to reach out to different sectors of the community in order to promote organ donation including signing of organ donation cards and registering with CODR –

- (a) appeal to community leaders to express public support for organ donation;
- (b) encourage all members of civil servants to participate in organ donation promotional activities;
- (c) rally the support of caring companies in the private sector to promote organ donation amongst their employees;
- (d) engage different community organizations including healthcare and social welfare agencies to promote organ donation amongst their staff and service targets;
- (e) collaborate with schools and educational institutions to organize exhibitions and seminars to enlist the support of students to further garner support for organ donation in the community; and
- (f) launch media campaigns targeting the general public with our Organ Donation Ambassadors, Ms Miriam Yeung (楊千嬅) and Mr Leo Ku (古巨基) on television channels;
- (g) publicize the launch of CODR through a new Announcement of Public Interest to be broadcast on television and radio channels starting from November 2008;
- (h) arrange poster and roving exhibitions in shopping malls and other public venues to reach out to the general public; and
- (i) arrange organ donation message to be distributed through public utility bills, in order to reach every household in the community.

12. We hope that, through these promotional efforts, more people will indicate their wish to donate organs after death. More importantly, through the campaign we hope to create a general acceptance in the society of organ donation, thus reducing the reluctance of family members to agree to donate the organs of the deceased, and hence increase the likelihood of successful organ donation, benefitting more patients on the waiting list for organ transplant. We are also exploring other possible ideas of further promoting organ donation in the community, including means of encouraging recognition of the charitable act of organ donation by the deceased.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and to support organ donation by signing organ donation cards and registering with the CODR.

**Food and Health Bureau
November 2008**

Total Number of Organ / Tissue Donation in Public Hospitals (2003 -2007)

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Waiting (31.12.2007)
Organ/tissue						
Kidney						
Cadaveric	42	44	50	53	58	1489
Living	7	6	8	13	8	
Liver						
Cadaveric	19	20	24	23	26	126
Living	36	56	38	48	41	
Domino	0	1	1	1	0	
Liver – kidney	1	0	1	0	0	2
Heart	5	7	8	7	5	9
Lung	0	0	2	1	1	2
Heart-lung	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cornea (pieces)	198	230	214	244	198	400
Skin	5	30	13	8	13	As needed
Bone	0	4	3	3	1	