

For discussion on
15 February 2016

**Legislative Council
Panel on Health Services**

Update on Promotion of Organ Donation

INTRODUCTION

This paper briefs Members on organ donation in Hong Kong and proposals to step up the promotional effort.

ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANT

2. Organ donation saves lives. For patients suffering from end-stage organ failure, organ transplant is often the only cure and helps them gain a new life with much improved quality.

3. Organs / tissues used for transplant come from two sources: living and cadaveric donations. The majority of organs / tissues used for transplant are cadaveric, accounting for about 90% of all organ donations in 2010. Only individuals who are certified brain dead can be organ donors. Organ transplant in Hong Kong is regulated under the Human Organ Transplant Ordinance (Cap. 465) to ensure, inter alia, that no commercial dealing is involved in organs for transplant. Currently, there are seven types of organs / tissues for which transplants are conducted in public hospitals. The number of organ / tissue donations in public hospitals under the Hospital Authority (HA), and the number of patients waiting for transplant over the past eight years are at **Annex A**.

ORGAN DONATION RATE IN HONG KONG

4. Organ donation and transplant, and eventually whether patients can be saved, depend on a number of factors. The HA has put in place mechanisms to handle and co-ordinate the clinical aspects involved in the process. However, one of the most important factors is the attitude of the general public towards organ donation.

5. Hong Kong has seen an overall increase in organ donation rate. It rose from about 4 donors per million population (pmp) in 2005 to about 6.1 pmp in 2013, which is higher than some of the other developed economies in Asia, but remains lower than some Western countries (**Annex B**). However it should be noted that organ donation rate is affected by a number of factors, including demographic structure and death rate, attitude of individuals and their family members, and clinical factors. Given the differences in background, customs, culture and individual circumstances, it is not appropriate to simply compare the organ donation rate of Hong Kong with other regions.

IDENTIFY WISH FOR ORGAN DONATION

The Centralised Organ Donation Register (CODR)

6. The number of people registered at the CODR is an indicator of the number of potential donors who are willing to donate organs after death. The CODR was established by the Department of Health (DH) in 2008 to provide members of the public with a convenient channel to register their wish to donate organs after death. The CODR provides a reliable and effective means for Organ Donation Coordinators to ascertain, upon patients' death, their previously expressed wish to donate organs, so that they may approach the patients' families as soon as possible to seek their consent for donation of the deceased's organs to save patients in urgent need of organ transplant. All data collected in the CODR is classified as personal data and is treated with strict confidentiality. Those data are only accessible to authorised parties and the public do not need to worry about data leakage.

7. Members of the public can register their wish to donate organs after death through the CODR by mail, fax or through the Internet (www.organdonation.gov.hk). Upon receipt of the registrations, the CODR staff will contact the registrants for verifications individually. Over the years, the cumulative number of registrations in the CODR has been increasing, yet the annual number fluctuates. The number of registration surged in October 2015 following the media coverage of patients awaiting organs for transplant. The detailed yearly breakdown is at **Annex C**.

Organ Donation Card

8. As an alternative, members of the public may carry signed organ donation cards or express their wish to healthcare workers. The DH has been distributing organ donation leaflets together with the cards through the DH clinics and venues, other government departments and public amenities as well as non-governmental organizations, to facilitate and enhance the public understanding and participation in organ donation.

9. In the event that a deceased person had not indicated his / her wish by signing the organ donation card or registering in the CODR, his / her organs can still be donated with the consent of his / her family members.

Organ Donation Coordinators

10. The Organ Donation Coordinators (formerly titled as Organ Transplant Coordinators) of the HA play an important role in promoting organ donation. In case of the presence of a brain stem dead patient, the Organ Donation Coordinator would approach families of the patient who may be potential donors and explain to them the details of organ donation in the hope that they will give consent to donate organs of the deceased. The Organ Donation Coordinators are also responsible for promoting organ donation among healthcare staff and providing support and co-ordination for external organ donation promotional activities. The HA has increased its establishment to nine Organ Donation Co-ordinators in 2015-16 to strengthen internal and external promotion of organ donation. The HA will review the effectiveness of the latest enhancement and the manpower of Organ Donation Coordinators as appropriate.

FOCUS GROUP STUDY ON ORGAN DONATION

11. With a view to identifying incentives for and causes of reservation against organ donation, DH conducted a focus group study in April 2015. The results were announced at a press conference co-hosted with the HA in November 2015. The study revealed that the views of participants who are willing to donate organs include helping others, organs being of no use after death, positive influence by mass media, better understanding of organ donation, and mentality change with increasing age.

12. The views of those who are unwilling or have not yet decided to donate organs include personal and family factors such as the traditional mindset of full body burial, objection by family members, the issue being irrelevant to young people, and elderly people who consider their organs as not suitable. Some participants had doubts about the process of organ transplantation, including insufficient knowledge on transplantation procedure, worries over surgical failure and organ wastage, doctors' failure to rescue, and disfigurement of the deceased. Regarding the CODR, some participants worried about data security and have limited knowledge about the operation of the Register.

13. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents will agree to allow their family members to donate organs after death if they have expressed their desire beforehand. Those respondents who are unwilling to donate organs themselves tend to respect their family members' wish to donate organs. However, if their family members never expressed their willingness to donate organs, the respondents tend to make decisions according to their own willingness.

ON-GOING PROMOTIONAL EFFORT

14. Over the years, the Government has been working to gradually inculcate a culture of organ donation in the community with a view to reducing reluctance or hesitation of individuals and family members in donating organs. DH and HA have been working with various professional community partners such as organ donation coordinators who play a supportive and coordinating role, with a view to creating a positive atmosphere for organ donation in the whole community.

15. The DH has taken the following promotional measures:
- (a) establishing an institution-based network involving public bodies, private companies and NGOs to work in collaboration with the Government to promote organ donation, and to encourage registration in the CODR in institutions. There are currently over 300 supporting organisations;
 - (b) enhancing public understanding and acceptability of organ donation through public education activities such as exhibitions and seminars. In the past three years, the DH organised about 190 seminars and exhibitions in various places such as hospitals, Government buildings / offices, etc.;
 - (c) launching promotional activities on television, radio, the Internet and other media;
 - (d) encouraging public participation through electronic means such as setting up an Organ Donation Facebook Fan Page in August 2011 to enhance the promotion of organ donation among the younger population. As at end-2015, there were over 20 000 fans recorded in the traditional Chinese version of the "Organ Donation@HK" Facebook fan page;
 - (e) distributing promotional materials in various occasions and events. Since 2008, DH has distributed more than 2.2 million leaflets with CODR registration forms; and
 - (f) establishing the Garden of Life in Kowloon Park to recognise the charitable acts of organ donors and their families and provide an amenity area for organ donation education and promotional activities.

FURTHER EFFORTS to PROMOTE ORGAN DONATION

Committee of Promotion of Organ Donation

16. The Committee of Promotion of Organ Donation will be established in the first half of 2016 involving the relevant professional organizations and non-government organizations (NGOs), as well as media partners. The Committee will be dedicated to devising promotional strategies for the promotion of organ donation as well as coordinating the promotional activities of different sectors in the society. We propose to focus on several key messages, including informing family and friends on one's wish to donate organs, helping persons in need, encouraging registration at the CODR, etc.

Collaboration

17. NGOs are the key partners of the DH in promoting organ donation. For example, to celebrate the seventh anniversary of the launch of CODR in November 2015, the DH had, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Medical Association, the HA, Hong Kong Society of Transplantation and Hong Kong Liver Foundation, organised a seminar, to further promoting registration for organ donation among the public through joint efforts with primary care doctors. DH will continue to collaborate with NGOs in promoting registration at the CODR and organ donation.

Publicity campaign

18. To enhance the public understanding and awareness of organ donation, DH has produced two Announcements of Public Interest (APIs). Another new API will be produced to encourage members of the public to express their wish of organ donation to their family members in 2016. We will continue to work with media partners to strengthen the publicity effort.

Survey on attitude towards organ donation

19. In view of the recent discussion of different organ donation mechanisms, the Government is planning another round of survey to assess in details the public's understanding and acceptance of organ donation and different organ donation mechanism. We will also continue to discuss with

the professional sectors and interested parties in the light of the recent discussions on organ donation in the community and duly consult the public before making any substantial changes to the existing regime.

ADVICE SOUGHT

20. Members are invited to note the progress of the promotion of organ donation.

**Food and Health Bureau
Department of Health
Hospital Authority
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Annex A

**Number of organ / tissue donation & patient waiting for transplantation
under Hong Kong Hospital Authority**

Organ / Tissue	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Waiting (as at 31.12.2015)
<u>Kidney donation</u>									
Deceased donor	65	87	74	59	84	70	63	66	1941
Live donor	12	8	7	8	15	12	16	15	
<u>Liver donation</u>									
Deceased donor	26	43	42	30	45	38	36	36	89
Live donor	42	41	53	44	33	34	27	23	
Heart donation	6	10	13	9	17	11	9	14	36
Double Lung donation	1	2	2	1	3	2	4	13	16
Single Lung donation	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Cornea donation (piece)	211	203	250	238	259	248	337	262	374
Skin donation	19	17	23	21	6	4	9	10	Uncertain
Bone donation	1	0	6	0	3	3	1	4	Uncertain

Asia-Oceania Actual Deceased Organ Donors 2013/14
(Per Million Population (PMP))¹

Economies	2013	2014
Australia	16.9	16.1
South Korea	8.4	9
New Zealand	8.1	10.2
Hong Kong	6.1	5.4
Japan	0.6	--
Malaysia	0.5	--

¹ Source: International Registry in Organ Donation and Transplantation (www.irodat.org) (Accessed on 4 February 2016)

**Number of Registrations in the
Centralised Organ Donation Register (CODR)**

The total number of registrations registering individuals' wishes to donate organs after death at the CODR managed by DH in the past years is as follows -

	2009 Note 1	2010	2011	2012 Note 2	2013	2014	2015
Number of total registrations during the year	45 150	23 896	22 610	27 518	24 036	19 868	29 357
Cumulative total no. of registrations <i>(as at 31 December of the year concerned)</i>	45 150	69 046	91 656	115 578	139 614	159 482	188 839

Note 1: The CODR was established in November 2008 and statistics on CODR registrations during 2008 and 2009 were counted as a whole.

Note 2: For more accurate reflection of the number of persons registering their wish to donate after death, figures in 2012 present the number of persons after elimination of multiple entries.