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Headline: Organ donation is proof of new life for recipients

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TOI'S CAMPAIGN IN ITS 10TH YEAR
HONOURS THE DONORS AND
ACKNOWLEDGES THE ULTIMATE GIFT

Shelly Thevenin/thesunmag.com

Daisy Thomas's heart belongs to someone else, but his spirit is his own. The 38-year-old delivery person who drives for Amazon each day around Kochi underwent a heart transplant in 2020.

From a state of breathlessness, he recently participated in a vigorous 10K run in the World 2023 Transplant Games in Perth, Australia. "I'm lucky with the next time," Thomas, who missed a needed by a whisker, said.

He was diagnosed with idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy. After his transplant, he took part in a 10K run in December 2022 to promote organ donation. "Life has become more productive and cheerful for me," Thomas said. He is one of the thousands of organ recipients in India who lead an active life.

the effort. This year the focus is on transplant recipients who undertake vigorous travel and adventure activities and have represented the country in sports and other fields in international events, creating awareness about the gift of life.

Dr Santosh Shetty, executive director & CEO of Kokilaben Deemed to be Hospital, said the country's organ donation rates are promising despite its cultural of giving.

"Approximately, 20 people die every day waiting for an organ. Huge efforts are needed from the public and private hospitals to reach the desired number of organ donations in the country," he added.

Kokilaben Deemed to be Hospital
Organ donation is the ultimate gift

Times Organ Donation Drive
THE TIMES OF INDIA

To sign up as an organ donor, give a missed call on 796291122 or visit organbankindia.org

Activities to end each week has to be done to match the need for organ with donors. Data from the Directorate of Health Services shows that every year 1.75 lakh people need kidneys, but only 9,000 transplants are done. Over two lakh people die of liver failure or liver cancer, but only 1,500 transplants are performed. Many others need heart, small bowel, pancreas and lung transplants.

Increasing awareness and facilitating the donor-recipient bond are key. National Organ Transplant Programme has recommended giving Rs 15,000 to the family of the deceased donor, but actual disbursal has been poor. In Maharashtra, just one of the 100 families who donated their loved ones' organs got the reimbursement in 2022.

Organ donation from the deceased is better in the southern states with Telangana (166), Tamil Nadu (156), Karnataka (151), Gujarat (140) and Maharashtra (140) leading. NODTTO data for 2022 shows:

Tamil Nadu leads with 525 deceased donors transplants followed by Telangana with 484 transplants, Karnataka with 478, Gujarat with 380 and Maharashtra with 361.

Bethel NCR topped living donor transplants with 5,432, followed by 1,990 from Tamil Nadu, 1,422 from Kerala, 1,222 from Maharashtra and 1,069 from West Bengal.

In Haryana, senior secretary of NODTTO South Region said they went to each district organising such campaigns. Tamil Nadu has 120 private hospitals registered under the programme and of the 36 government hospitals, 32 are registered while the others are non-transplant referral centres.

BRAIN DEATH COMMITTEES CAN CHIP IN

» Despite a large number of brain-dead patients in government hospitals, they contact barely a handful of transplant recipients

» Cadaver organ donation is better than live donations and such committees can help the cause

» Four doctors constitute this committee... the medical administrator is in charge of the hospital, authorised specialist, neurologist/neurosurgeon and medical officer treating the patient

» Less than 10% of the 700-odd medical colleges have a brain-dead death declaration committee which restricts organ donation. When it comes to organ donation and transplantation and counselling, these committees are crucial. Even today, most organ transplants take place from living donors. We need thousands of cadaver donation organ transplants to reach self-sufficiency — Dr Virek Kulkarni

(Secretary of the Indian Society of Organ Transplantation and a noted speaker)



Organ donation is extremely close to me, Kokilaben Deemed to be Hospital has partnered with The Times of India for its organ donation drive for close to a decade now to raise awareness, disseminate information and spread the word. Today, India is following. During the vibrant efforts of the government and campaigns like ours, the number of organ donors has risen substantially. It is heartening to see more participation and commitment to this noble cause. Our appeal to donors and society is a simple one, when we have the power to save a life, why not give life? — Tina Anand (Chairperson, Kokilaben Deemed to be Hospital)



India's organ recipients, donors winning medals at Transplant Games is a celebration of life



Most northern states have only one or two hospitals in the programme, she added.

"In many cases, people are willing to donate organs as they believe that the deceased person's family would live through someone else. All Tamil Nadu governments have been supportive, irrespective of who is in power. We launched an app for easy organ transplant registration. After filling in the details, the hospitals are alerted across the state and in a click they can accept or decline the organ. The government generated a lot of awareness about it via hospitals, and in the community," she added.

Experts said insurance companies must modify policies which are comprehensive. Be it a live or a cadaver donation, the cost factor is always in play. Some companies of

Health insurance cover eludes many organ donors



for insurance coverage but they come with multiple riders.

Bhaskar Narasimhan, head of the health administration team at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, said policies typically cover the pre and post-operation costs for the insured recipient, and hospitalisation costs for the donor as well.

"Policy features may differ from product to product. The donor's expenses towards the treatment and the harvesting of the organ, if the recipient is insured with us, is covered under our health policy," he added.

Dr Shetty said immediate consent to create more awareness about brain death. "Follow-up by empathetic transplant coordinators and grief counsellors to ensure that the family is counselled about the process and the difference it would make to other people's lives are necessary," he added.

"The primary hurdle in people consenting to organ donation is their deep-seated beliefs. Father Blake de Souza, vicar general of Parana Diocese, said the Roman Catholic church believes that a person can donate organs, but only after death. "The church supports such an act as noble and charitable and an expression of solidarity with humanity. Organ donation promotes the culture of giving another person a better life."

Hope public campaigns are needed to build awareness about the need and ease of organ donation. Participation of all healthcare institutions, including renal training houses which represent the majority of healthcare delivery is critical, Dr Shetty added.

(With inputs from Anuja Jalowari)