

THE TRUTH ABOUT HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

There is no doubt that it is a good act to become a human organ donor to prolong the life of man or improve his quality of life. However, we are always told about the person who receives the organs, i.e. the recipient, but we never hear about the donor and his condition while his organs are being harvested.

The Philosophic Academy in La Plata is not against human organ transplants, but it is against organ harvesting when the donor is diagnosed "brain dead" because such a person is alive with a beating heart while his organs are removed. Therefore, the person's death is brought forward, and in this way, he is considered to be a person who not only is definitely going to die but also condemned to die, since his last prognosis has been put forward in order to remove his organs. This fact goes against the right to life stated in the 12 article of the Buenos Aires Province's Constitution: "All of the persons in the province have, among other rights , the following one: 1) The right to life from conception till natural death - also stated in the 103 article of the Civil Constitution.

It is perfectly known that from a corpse that most people are used to recognizing as such and that is ready to be buried, none of its main organs can be removed for transplants.

The necessary condition for the main organs to be usable is that the person who has his main organs removed is brain dead while all of his body remains alive, even if it is supported by mechanical means, which, in many cases, this condition has remained for many months.

People should be told about this fact, because when they hear other people speak about donating after death, they imagine a corpse with no vital functions; but they don't imagine the removal of organs from a body with a heart beating.

In the Organ Procurement Programme of the Health Ministry in Buenos Aires Province, the donor is known as a patient who has to be kept alive with circulatory-respiratory support till organ harvesting.

At the same time, this programme expresses that if the patient admitted to hospital is a corpse, i.e. he's really dead and so all of his main organs are not fit for transplants, only his tissues can be removed.

This means that there's a double talk. People are told of a corpse and of after death, whilst internally, they speak of keeping the patient alive till organ harvesting. This deceiving talk is unknown by most people and by the communication means.

People believe that the removal of organs takes place when they are dead and so nothing in their body is working.

On 24 October, 1999 in the lecture room at the School of Law in Buenos Aires's University, D. Carlos R. Gherardi from Hospital de Clínicas Gral. San Martín stated: "If a potential male donor who is brain dead has his semen removed so as to implant it into a woman, this woman may become pregnant. What's more, if a potential female donor is pregnant, she may be supplied with food and maintained biologically all along her pregnancy till delivery.

Since when have corpses had children?

Carey A. Byrney and Richard G. Nilges, two American doctors, expressed that in the case of brain death, the patient is diagnosed dead but treated as if he were alive. This patient's heart is still beating, there is blood pressure and the knee reacts by tapping on it. The skin color is normal, and by pressing the skin, it turns white, and the normal color returns by releasing the pressure. A suction drainage and a change of bodily position has to be carried out to avoid pneumonia. The patient has to be turned over to avoid scabs.

How can possibly a corpse become ill, develop pneumonia or have scabs?

In many countries, the cerebral death or so called brain death has been considered to be a person's death, which implies that this patient -a donor who is under this condition- is legally dead but not really dead.

This invented, utilitarian (brain) death prompts to remove organs from people who are alive.

According to this new concept of death, corpses can become ill and have children. In England and other countries, for instance, brain dead patients are anesthetized so that they may feel no pain when their organs are being removed. Finally, they die of cardio- respiratory failure or of their organ removal.

The dying donor's life is as worthy as that of the also dying recipient.

What is the moral, ethical and legal criterion to determine that the recipient's life deserves a more and better consideration than that of the donor?

The University of Navarre in Spain has made public the documents of The International Bioethics Congress held in 1999. In this congress, D. Alan Shewmon, Professor of Neurology at the Medical School, UCLA, Los Angeles, USA, provided statistical reports into 56 survival cases of dead brain patients. 37 of these patients survived till a spontaneous heart stroke, whereas 19 of these 37 patients had their treatment discontinued. More than a half survived over a month, whilst a third made it for more than two months. 7 patients survived over 6 months and 4 patients lived on for more than a year. The record of a living person reaches 16 years and he's still alive!

This last patient caught meningitis at the age of four, causing him such an intracranial pressure that even his skull bones split. Several medical tests showed his brain waves flattened and there were no spontaneous breath or cerebral trunk reflexes for the following 16 years. His doctors suggested disconnecting the life support system, but his mother did not agree to it. The first stage was very hard to him, but finally he was taken home. Now he's been maintained on a respirator, he can assimilate the food he's provided with, he urinates naturally and needs a little more than a nurse's care. Though he's brain dead, he's overcome infections and cured injuries.

From many parts of the world, many medical professionals who extensively deal with transplants have confused ideas whether a brain dead donor is really dead. Consequently, these doctors' consciences might be subconsciously jeopardized for their participation in a utilitarian death. This fact is even less acceptable in a society in which there's a public feeling that accepting the murder of a dying patient for a sufficiently good cause might contribute to minimizing any respect for human life.

The concept of brain death prompted the speculatively invented image of brain life as a way to justify abortion and human embryo experiments. Though the idea of brain life is dismissed by the consideration of the integrating unity, this idea comes from the reductionism trend towards the conscience of personality that has gradually become a fact to explain brain death.

There's a serious problem of lack of information. The majority of those who apply for an organ donor card, and most relatives who agree to organ donation have little information about the condition of brain death as well as what really happens in a surgery room. Whenever people read the phrase: "after my death", most of them imagine a dead body with no pulse. Yet, they might dread to think that this phrase really means: "after I'm in a coma with no breath, but all of my remaining organs are working well, and what's even worse, my organs will be removed while my heart is still beating spontaneously". In addition, nobody knows that the explanation given in order to equate brain death with death is questionable and the empirical evidence collected on this issue is in itself dubious. As a result, the information for a potential donor to make his moral decision is systematically hidden.

THE OPINION OF THE ROMAN CHURCH:

On 25 December 2000 and on 30 January 2001, Pope John Paul urged to defend life at any stage from conception until natural death.

When the heart stops beating (natural death), man's organs are not suitable for transplantation.

When their organs are removed, donors are brain-dead, and the natural process of detachment between soul and body, caused by the death of all their cells, is altered.

Thus, the donor as a soul or spirit must deeply feel pain when his organs are removed and he will probably follow his organs that are now in the recipient's body

Evidence from patients' experiences, commonly known by transplant professionals in the USA, shows that, in some cases, organ recipients acquire the ideas, tastes, preferences and the sexual orientation of the donor.

This means that the donor as a soul or spirit causes mental and physical influence on the recipient.

Man is something else than a body; he/she is a soul with a body. In the case of recipients, there exist events they experience that are beyond the sphere of physical science but are within the reach of spiritual sphere. Experience and professional doctors' observations provide evidence for this fact.

Man bears the unavoidable responsibility for his/her own acts and thoughts and he/she will have to give full account and make up for his/her wrong behavior in this life, in the spiritual world when he/she abandons the body, or in a new physical life.

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