Determinants of Willingness to Become Organ Donors among Dialysis Patients’ Family Members

Makmor Tumin,¹ Nurul Huda Mohd Satar,² Roza Hazli Zakaria,² Raja Noriza Raja Ariffin,¹ Lim Soo-Kun,¹ Ng Kok-Peng,¹ Khaled Tafran¹

Purpose: This study explores the factors affecting the willingness of dialysis patients’ family members to become involved in living and deceased organ donation.

Materials and Methods: We utilize cross sectional data on 350 family members of dialysis patients collected through self-administered survey from June to October 2013. The factors affecting willingness to become deceased and living organ donors among respondents were identified by running logistic regressions.

Results: The findings reveal that ethnicity, education and role in family are significant factors explaining willingness for living donation, while ethnicity, knowledge of organ donation and donor age drive willingness for deceased donation. We also find that the reasons of respondents being unwilling to donate center on the lack of information and family objections for deceased donation, while being medically unfit, scared of surgery and family objections are the reasons for unwillingness to donate living organs.

Conclusion: In light of our findings, educational efforts are suggested to decrease the reluctance to become involved in living and deceased donation.

Keywords: health knowledge; attitudes; practice; decision making; motivation; tissue donors; psychology; tissue and organ procurement; kidney transplantation; living donors.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries including Malaysia are facing severe shortages of donated organs. Indeed, Malaysia has one of the lowest donation rates in the world. In 2008, the deceased donation rate only stood at 0.48 per million population (PMP) which is much lower than the donation rates in other countries, such as Spain, (34.13 PMP) the United States (26.27 PMP), and Singapore (6 PMP).⁵ Although modern medical technologies allow transferring organs from living bodies, this process does not help increase supply. Further, while in some countries including Malaysia, incentives have been used to increase living and deceased, the outcomes remain minimal. This finding suggests that a deeper understanding of the factors affecting potential donors’ willingness to become involved in living and deceased organ donation is vital.

Previous studies indicate that many factors explain people’s willingness to donate organs, such as relational ties for living donations,⁶ gender, income,⁶ cultural and religious beliefs,⁴⁶ and educational level.¹⁴ However, knowledge of organ donation and transplantation and family influence on organ donation decisions have been found to be the most important factors influencing living and deceased organ donation.⁵⁶ Previous studies of the factors influencing decisions to become an organ donor have also highlighted the importance of knowledge, values, attitudes and social norms towards donation, as found by Ghorbani and colleagues,¹⁵ Trompet and colleagues¹⁶ and Morgan and Miller;¹⁷ Rodrigue and colleagues¹⁸ compare the characteristics of donor and non-donor families, finding that in addition to race, marital status and employment status, attitudes towards organ donation play a significant role in explaining the probability of consenting to donation. They also find that family members with more favorable attitudes towards organ donation are more likely to give their consent. Morgan¹⁹ and Trompet and colleagues²⁰ studied the importance of communication about organ donation in the family to increase the likelihood of them giving their consent and thus influence the rate of organ donation.

In parallel, for the Malaysian case, earlier studies have shown that a lack of knowledge of the medical issues related to organ donation is the primary reason behind Malaysians’ reluctance to donate their organs after death.²¹ On the other hand, some studies have found that in multiethnic communities, ethnicity could be a significant factor in determining willingness to donate, for both living and deceased donations.²²²³²⁴

¹ Department of Administrative Studies and Politics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
² Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
³ Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
⁴ Institute of Research Management and Monitoring, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
*Correspondence: Department of Administrative Studies and Politics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Tel: +60 3 79673609. Fax: +60 3 79673719. E-mail: makmor@um.edu.my.
Received: November 2014 & Accepted: June 2015
ple with suitable information on organ donation could be a channel to overcome the low deceased organ donation rates in Malaysia. An educational effort is also suggested for living donation to relax the negative attitudes towards living donation surgery of about 27% of potential donors. Moreover, we suggest that providing potential donors with adequate medical education on living and deceased organ donation may increase donation rates indirectly by reducing the huge influence of family objection to donations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The authors wish to thank the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia and the University of Malaya for funding this research under the Exploratory Research Grant Scheme (Project Number: ER019-2012A).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None declared.

REFERENCES


18. M ossialos E, Costa-Font J, Rudisill C. Does organ donation legislation affect individuals' willingness to donate their own or their relative's organs? Evidence from European Union survey data. BMC Health Serv Res. 2008;8:48.