Factors Associated with Health Care Professionals’ Attitude Toward the Presumed Consent System

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper explores health care professionals’ potential attitude toward organ donation if the presumed consent system were to be implemented in Malaysia, as well as factors associated with this attitude.

Materials and Methods: We used self-administered questionnaires to investigate the attitude of 382 health care professionals from the University of Malaya Medical Center between January and February 2014. The responses were analyzed using logistic regression.

Results: Of the 382 respondents, 175 (45.8%) stated that they would officially object to organ donation if the presumed consent system were to be implemented, whereas the remaining 207 (54.2%) stated that they would not object. The logistic regression showed that health care professionals from the Malay ethnic group were more likely to object than those from Chinese (adjusted odds ratio of 0.342; P = .001) and Indian and other (adjusted odds ratio of 0.341; P = .003) ethnic groups. Health care professionals earning 3000 Malaysian Ringgit or below were more likely to object than those earning above 3000 Malaysian Ringgit (adjusted odds ratio of 1.919; P = .006). Moreover, respondents who were initially unwilling to donate organs, regardless of the donation system, were more likely to object under the presumed consent system than those who were initially willing to donate (adjusted odds ratio of 2.765; P < .001).

Conclusions: Health care professionals in Malaysia have a relatively negative attitude toward the presumed consent system, which does not encourage the implementation of this system in the country at present. To pave the way for a successful implementation of the presumed consent system, efforts should be initiated to enhance the attitude of health care professionals toward this system. In particular, these efforts should at most target the health care professionals who are Malay, earn a low income, and have a negative default attitude toward deceased donation.

Key words: Deceased donor, Informed consent system, Organ donation

Introduction

Malaysia has a serious shortfall in human organs, to the extent that in December 2014 more than 18,000 patients were waiting for a transplant.2 On average, only 60 living and 30 deceased transplants are performed every year.2 Because living donation has resulted in organ trafficking around the world, improving deceased donation rates appear to be the only efficient solution to address this shortfall in organs. The Declaration of Istanbul states that the “therapeutic potential of deceased organ donation should be maximized [and] efforts to initiate or enhance deceased donor transplantation are essential to minimize the burden on living donors.”3

There are evidences that the presumed consent system (PCS), in which everyone is a donor unless he or she objects during his or her lifetime, produces higher deceased donation rates than the informed consent system (ICS), in which only those who registered during their lifetime are considered for posthumous organ donation.4,6 However, some argue that the higher donation rates reported by countries applying the PCS are not merely attributed to this system but also to other factors, such as the appropriate organization of the organ donation and