ENHANCING THE DONOR POOL: A REVIEW OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

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ABSTRACT:
As the debate on accepting financial incentives persists, more and more findings linked to its success as well as to its foreseeable backlash continue to unravel. Specifically out to enhance perceptions on financial incentives, this paper reviews important aspects of the financial incentives and provides a diverse range of empirical findings at a glance. Through a review of several empirical findings and literature, this paper argues that several basic practices of the financial incentives are indeed instrumental to enhancing organ donation. However, more experimentation is necessary to unearth the best mode that is best responsive to a society and subsequently, rejects the overly generalization that labels it as unethical. (JUMMEC 2010; 13(2): 102-106)

KEYWORDS: organ donation, donor pool, financial incentives

Introduction
The state of organ shortage is no longer a new topic, so also are the methods used to procure them. However, the overarching debate rests on which method is ethical and which is not, thus, systematically blurring the most effective model that will make significant impact by saving more lives. The increasing deaths of patients awaiting transplantation are usually due to a deficit of donated organs against a huge demand score. It is discernible that the roots of this asymmetry lie in the acute shortfall in altruism and skepticism in the integrity of the financial incentives thereby, causing a huge gap in the course of increasing the donor pool. As a consequence, it has not only aggravated organ shortage, but has opened several controversial procurement alternatives like xenotransplantation that involves the transplantation of organs from one specie to another specie, commonly harvested from pigs and transplanted in humans (1), as well as the practice of harvesting organs from executed prisoners as practiced in China, regardless, neither of the prisoner’s consent prior to execution nor of his family’s after execution (2).

At this moment, the U.S has a staggering backlog of 110,135 patients on the waiting list as compared to just about 38,000 in 1994 (3), and for patients awaiting kidney transplant, Malaysia in October 2010 has 11,000 registered patients on the waiting list (4) as against 5,542 in 1999 (5). These figures are disturbing, and much of this problem is closely tied to sole inclination to altruism which conversely has been overstretched and lacks the capacity to cushion the rising organ shortage. Undoubtedly the ethical and strict principles that saturate the altruistic method as well as, the rejection of financial incentives by many are major impediments aggravating organ shortage.

In spite of the fact that financial incentives has been remarkable in drastically reducing organ shortage (6, 7, 8), it has also been seen as unproductive, unethical and regressive to altruism by others (9, 10, 11, 12), unfortunately heralding few supporters and many opponents (13) and hence, further straining the chances of enhancing the donor pool.

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