

Dead or Dead Enough?

Organ Donation: Myths, Facts, and Perception



Rhode Island Ethics Network Education Symposium

Thursday, December 4, 2003

8:00 am – 10:00 am sharp

*Petteruti Lounge, Faunce House
75 Waterman Street, Providence, RI*

Panelists include:

- ➔ Paul E. Morrissey, MD
Assistant Medical Director, New England Organ Bank
- ➔ Stephen T. Mernoff, MD
Medical Director, Neurorehabilitation Program, Rehabilitation Hospital of Rhode Island
- ➔ Jay M. Baruch, MD
Center for Biomedical Ethics, Brown Medical School; Director, Rhode Island Ethics Network

Persons consenting to organ donation must be declared dead for procurement to begin. Death is established using cardiopulmonary or brain death criteria.

Brain death presents many conceptual challenges to patients, their families, and even hospital staff. While awaiting organ harvest, these persons, though declared dead, may receive ventilator support and be subject to CPR should cardiac arrest occur.

Cardiac death fits our traditional image of death, and non-heart-beat cadaver donation (NHBCD) has returned to favor. Cardiac death may appear straightforward, but when tied to organ donation presents many areas for ethical inquiry. For example, from the moment the heart stops, how much time must pass before irreversible cardiac death can be declared and organ procurement begun? Are there agreed upon standards? Can end-of-life care, withdrawal of medical treatment, and respect for the dying be separated from the organ procurement process? What constitutes valid consent? What is the role of ethics committees in hospital NHBCD protocols? What other concerns are raised in this complex scenario when one's "treatment" serves to benefit another?

These issues and many others will be the focus of this "community" exploration into the ethical challenges and possible impediments to organ procurement. The stakes are high. People on transplant lists die every day! Join us for what will surely be a provocative discussion, including presentations that address brain death and non-heart-beat cadaver donors. A delicious and healthy breakfast will be served!

Call Donna at 401-863-3969, or email Donna_Goodnow@Brown.edu to RSVP or to get directions. Thank you!