Deceased Organ Donation

The number of transplant candidates in the United States waiting for an organ continues to grow. The need for more organs intensifies the ongoing discrepancy between the number of candidates on waiting lists and the availability of organs. The success of solid organ and vascular composite allograft transplantation are dependent on the availability of donor organs. The process of closing this gap between organ supply and demand includes (but is not inclusive of) promoting organ donation at a local and national level, and educating the community on identifying, evaluating and optimally managing all potential donors.

The American Society of Transplantation (AST) recognizes the decision to donate organ(s) or a portion of an organ, as a truly selfless act, focused on the potential to save the life of another. Moreover, this decision may come at a particularly difficult time (impending death) for family members of a loved one. To this end, the AST supports the promotion and development of organ donor registries and encourages the public to talk to their physicians and loved ones about end of life issues. The AST encourages its membership to sign up to be an organ donor by signing their organ donor card or by whatever means their state identifies them as an organ donor.

The AST supports the following current strategies implemented to increase organ donation:

- Timely referral
- Routine notification and mandated choice
- Donation after circulatory determination of death
- Computerized donor registries and first-person consent donor designation
- Other efforts to increase organ donation (such as the previous organ donation and transplantation breakthrough collaborative)

Along with these approaches, resolving the organ shortage will require additional innovative interventions. The AST strongly supports identifying and promoting the following additional areas for further study and review:

1. Educating intensive care physicians, nurses, and respiratory therapists on donor identification, management and optimization of organs. Improved donor management has the potential to result in additional organs for transplantation.
2. Fostering communication and collaboration of organ procurement organizations and transplant centers.
3. Supporting and promoting collaborative research in donor management, donor selection and procurement.

In summary, the AST supports the following initiatives:

- Promotion and development of organ donor registries.
- Encourages all members and the public to talk to their physicians and loved ones about end of life issues and to sign up to be organ donors.
- Continued emphasis on timely referral, routine notification and mandated choice to identify potential organ donors and to maximize donation options for self-designated donors or surviving next of kin.
- Expansion of programs to encourage first person consent and actionable donor registries.
- Partnership with other organizations working on organ donation to continuously improve and increase the number of organs available for transplant.
- Expansion of professional education programs to optimize the use of expanded criteria donors and donation after circulatory determination of death.
- Increased public recognition of organ donors and their families.
- Promotion and Federal funding of basic science and clinical research initiatives to improve the science of organ donation.

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