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Donor Designation Special Issue

Donor Registries Saving Lives

There are currently almost 100,000 people (including nearly 2,100 in the Northwest) waiting for life-saving organ transplants. Nationwide, 72 million licensed drivers and ID card holders have committed to donation by registering to be donors through their state registry or DMV. Thanks to recent changes to the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA), which strengthened state laws pertaining to donor designation, donation agencies in the Northwest are now able to honor the generous decision of those who would give the gift of donation.

Becoming a designated donor in Oregon, Washington and Idaho provides the opportunity to give legally binding consent for the gift of your organs, tissues and/or eyes upon your death. These gifts can be used for any purposes authorized by law, including transplant, research and education, unless you choose to limit the uses of your donations. By designating yourself as a donor, not only are you giving the gift of life to several other people, but you are also relieving your family of the burden of making that decision at the time of your death.

State law in Oregon, Washington and Idaho now allows donor designation to be indicated on a driver's license or an official donor document of gift (online registries), which in turn gives hospitals and donation agencies the authority to proceed with procurement without consent from family. Until this law went into effect, it had been practice that regardless of an individual's intention, as indicated on the drivers' license, donation agencies in the Northwest (Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank, Lions Eye Bank and Community Tissue Services) still requested consent from donor families. In many cases, families did not consent to donation despite their loved ones' stated wish to donate.

These changes now ensure that your generous decision to save lives through organ donation will be honored.

HOW DOES THIS REALLY WORK?:

DONATION AGENCIES AND FAMILIES OF DESIGNATED DONORS

Lions Eye Bank of Oregon, Community Tissue Services and Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank believe that the goal of donation is to restore life, sight and mobility to those in need. The donation agencies also believe that donation should be a good experience for families, giving them something positive to reflect upon when dealing with the loss of a loved one.

We have already begun to see the favorable impact that donor designation is having on grieving families. Since first-person consent was implemented on May 1, over 90 percent of families approached with the knowledge that their loved one had designated him- or herself as a donor have honored the decision of their loved one. Many families have expressed relief that this difficult decision has already been made by their loved one and that they did not have the burden of this decision during this emotionally stressful time. When a family does oppose donation, the donation agencies will work to answer all the family's questions. A lack of understanding of the donation process and what it means to donate should not cause a family to oppose donation. Informed decision-making, rather than a simple "yes" or "no", is the ultimate goal of the donation agencies.

SPECIFIC TO EYE AND TISSUE DONATION

Our goal is to honor the wishes of an individual who has made the generous decision to be a donor. However, when presented with the family who opposes their loved one's decision to donate, the eye and tissue banks will not go against the family's wishes. We will not proceed without a family's concurrence. We want donation to be a positive experience for a grieving family, bringing them a measure of comfort during a difficult time.

SPECIFIC TO ORGAN DONATION

We know that most Americans believe that by registering as a donor on their driver's license, they are ensuring that their organs will be used to save lives if at all possible. Our mandate is to carry out this generous decision, despite family objections to donation.

Our commitment to family service is as strong as it has always been, and our communication with families will be sensitive and individualized for each family. Our primary goal in communicating with the families of designated donors will be to ensure they understand as much of the donation process as they want to. Research has shown that nearly every family who initially opposes donation changes their mind after lengthy discussion with the donation agencies, and our goal is to bring every family we work with to this conclusion.

"WHAT DO I SAY?": TALKING WITH FAMILIES ABOUT DONOR DESIGNATION

Since Northwest donation agencies have begun recognizing drivers' license designations as legal first-person consent, we have seen a large increase in the number of designated donors. What this means for hospital designated requestors is that in cases where a potential donor has a donor designation, the requestor will not need to offer families a decision about donation. Instead designated requestors will share with the family that the loved one had made the choice to be a donor, will provide a copy of the Registry Document of Gift obtained from the donor agency representative, and will give family contact information to the donor agency.

We rely on your expertise and relationship with the family to guide your communications. You can use these scripts as suggestions for where to begin in talking with a family about their loved one's decision to donate.

If family is present and planning to stay at the hospital for a time after the death:

“Your loved one had decided to be an organ and tissue donor, and _____ from the donation agency will talk with you about the donation process. Would you like to talk with him/her now, or should he/she call you at home? (When, at what number?)”

If donor referral line is not called before patient dies and/if family is preparing to leave:

“Every family is given the opportunity to honor their loved one’s wishes regarding eye and tissue donation. If your loved one is a registered donor and meets criteria for eye and tissue donation, someone from the donation agencies will be contacting you in one to two hours to discuss this with you. If your loved one is not suitable for medical reasons, you will not receive a phone call. What is a phone number where you can be reached within the next couple of hours?”

If a family responds: “He/She didn’t want to be a donor...”

“Some decisions you and I can make together and some we cannot. While it is absolutely your right to refuse donation, we need for you to talk directly with the donor agency about your decision.”

Obtain a contact number where they can be reached.

If family refuses to give contact information, call the donor referral line (DRL) 1-800-344-8916 and notify local donation agencies “family refused to give contact information.”

Note: This checklist is for eye and tissue donation only. If you have a patient:

1. With a GCS of 5 or less and/or
2. For whom the staff and/or family are considering withdrawing mechanical/pharmacological support,

call the donor referral line, 1-800-344-8916, for internal organ donation evaluation.

ORGAN DONOR REGISTRATIONS CLIMB AS STATES OFFER ONLINE ACCESS

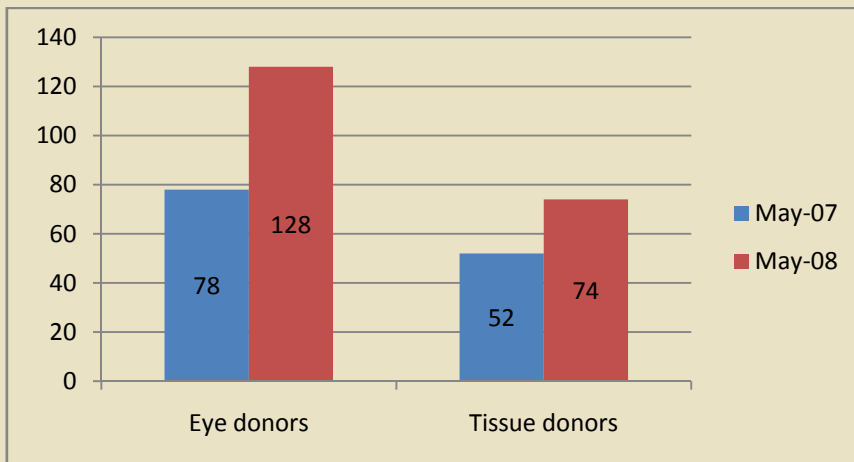
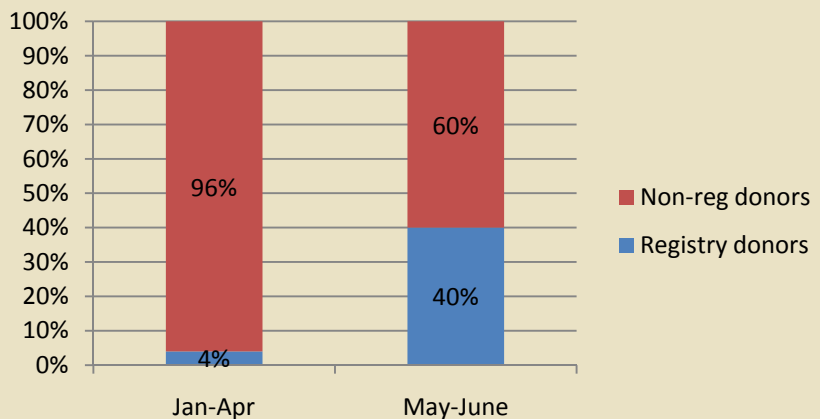
Across the United States, donor registration has increased 14 percent since the start of 2006, from 63 million to nearly 72 million. The rise in number of donor registrations is due in part to a surge in states establishing online registration sites to augment donor designation on driver's licenses. Oregon, Tennessee and Texas are the most recent states to add online registration, bringing the total to 31 states plus the District of Columbia.

States vary in how individuals can sign up on the donor registry – driver's license designation, online, paper or some combination. In Oregon, Washington and Idaho, all three ways of registering are equally powerful and meaningful, signifying consent to be a donor.

Currently there are 49 active donor registries with 42 of them classified as first-person consent registries, i.e., the individual's donor designation constitutes legal authorization for donation for individuals at least 18 years old, and additional authorization by family members is not required.

LOCAL DONATION NUMBERS GREATLY IMPACTED

Local donation agencies began accepting drivers' license coding from OR, WA and ID as consent for donation on May 1, 2008. Since then, the percentage of Registry donors in our service area has increased tenfold.



The number of eye and tissue donors in our service area has also increased dramatically thanks to donor designations.

DONATE LIFE NORTHWEST, DMV PARTNER TO INCREASE DONOR DESIGNATION

Because 98 percent of designated organ, eye and tissue donors register through their motor vehicle department, Oregon's DMV is a natural and critical partner in increasing the donor designation rate among licensed drivers. Donate Life Northwest is the nonprofit agency whose mission is to educate the public in Oregon and SW Washington about organ, eye and tissue donation. An Oregon DMV employee is designated as the contact for Donate Life Northwest to obtain required DMV approval of all donation-related information/programs/activities. Idaho and Washington DMV offices are served by Intermountain Donor Services and Living Legacy Foundation, respectively.

Educational brochures in English and Spanish are available in all Oregon field offices. In addition, the 15 highest-traffic offices display a scrolling reader board with bilingual donation messaging. Hillsboro DMV is showing English and Spanish educational videos in a pilot project to remind customers to designate themselves as donors on their license, permit or ID card. Organ donor information is also available on the DMV Web site and in the driver's manual.

A key piece of Donate Life Northwest's work with DMV is continuing to educate customer service employees about the importance of why and how to ask the required "D" question when issuing or renewing driver's licenses. "How the DMV employee asks the 'D' question makes a huge difference in the response, but it is not their job to offer the customer in-depth information about donation," says Judith Trujillo, manager of programs for Donate Life Northwest. "People need the information to make an educated decision before they visit the DMV."

Donate Life Northwest's programs and trained volunteer force do the ground work. Health care workers and people with a personal connection to donation and transplantation spoke to nearly 9,000 middle and high school students during the 2007-08 academic year. An additional 20,000 students were exposed to the concept of donation through school newspapers, health fairs, student projects and blood drives. In 2008-09, Donate Life Northwest will focus on 9th grade health classes and also renew a partnership with drivers' education programs in an effort to reach new drivers, particularly those under 18.

In addition to Donate Life Northwest's marketing plan, other donation educational programs include 10 Threads of Life quilts, partnering with Oregon's two blood banks through blood drives, a focus on faith groups during National Donor Sabbath, and the Community Champions business partnerships. Revamping the Donate Life Northwest Web site and developing a pilot Hispanic outreach are new educational programs planned for 2008-09.



DONOR REGISTRATION OPTIONS

There are three equally powerful and meaningful ways to register as a donor in Oregon, Washington and Idaho:

- Ask the motor vehicle department to code your driver's license, permit or ID
- Sign up online
 - Oregon: donatelifenw.org
 - Washington: donatelifetoday.com
 - Idaho: yesidaho.org
- Sign up on paper
 - Oregon: call 1-800-452-1369
 - Washington: call 1-877-275-5269
 - Idaho: call 1-866-937-4324

The driver's license code is considered "global" consent, i.e., permission to recover all organs, eyes and tissues deemed suitable for transplant or research.

The online registry and paper form are more easily updated than a driver's license and allow an individual to specify what they wish to donate, whether for transplant or research or both. Online and paper registration also offer those without a license a way to join the donor registry.



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