

ETHICAL ISSUES IN DONATION OF LIVE, NON-REGENERATING ORGANS

Dear Sir,

I wish to give a comment on a very important and first of its kind article from Pakistan regarding preliminary results of complications of renal transplantation from Lahore General Hospital (LGH), Lahore.¹ Although more than a decade has passed since the transplantation program was initiated in Pakistan, I have not seen an article like this before from any other transplant centre in Pakistan. Going through this article, a very important aspect of transplantation comes under focus, and it is the 'ethical issues in donation of live, non-regenerating organs.' The issue is getting a lot of attention in international medical literature but here in Pakistan, it has to receive its due share of importance.

The article reports rejection of graft in 18/51 (35.29%) of cases out of these 3/18 (16.67%) were hyperacute rejections, 8/18 (44.44%) acute rejections and 7/18 (38.89%) were chronic rejections. From neighbouring country's All India Institute of Medical Sciences acute rejection of graft is reported in 63%.² A search of literature (PubMed) (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/>) was searched with command "renal transplantation and rejection" on 30th August 2002 and got 14,221 hits. The results of numerous studies done worldwide were no different from what were reported from LGH.¹ The search did not yield any article from Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT). Search was repeated with command "SIUT" which yielded 30 hits. Only one article dealt with the rejection issue and that was also in paediatric population, it reported acute rejection at 57%.³ Going through this entire scenario one gets concerned about the issue of donation of live non-regenerating organs. Thus, it is clear that about 35-63% of live kidney donations will go waste. It is high time that medical community takes serious notice of this issue. The trend in the world is towards cadaveric donations.

God has not given anything in our body without purpose; may be at this point in time we do not know its full utility and significance. Moreover, in the absence of any long-term follow-up study in subjects who have given such donations, the issue comes under class 'C' of evidence based medicine. No doubt, this is an emotional issue for the relatives of patients requiring such organs, we as scientists have to ponder on:

● Should a person be allowed to donate/sell his non-regenerating organ? if yes.

● Should this be allowed if chances of rejection of such a donation are upto 63%?

I would like to put this issue on debate in your prestigious journal for comments from other valuable readers.

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