

## Letter to the Editor

# The Creativity and Commitment of Organ Procurement Personnel Overcome the Logistical Complexities of International Organ Donations

To the Editor:

Years ago, I faced a story (1) that taught me a lesson about the role of the organ procurement personnel in enrollment of potential donors (2,3). A couple of weeks ago, I faced another story that also emphasized the role of organ procurement personnel. Although these cases have occurred in very different parts of the world, they are similar in a way that commitment, creativity and altruism of organ procurement personnel have made a difference by turning potential donors into actual ones. The result has been successful organ procurement from international potential donors.

Case # 1: An Afghan refugee with no immediate family in Iran is diagnosed as brain dead. The organ procurement unit of a hospital in Iran contacts the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Iranian Embassy in Kabul finally tracks down the family in a small village in Afghanistan. The family grants consent for organ donation and two kidneys are transplanted to two Afghan candidates in Iran (1).

Case # 2: An Iranian student with no immediate family in the United States is diagnosed as brain dead in the United States. Due to the broken political relationship between the United States and Iran, and the lack of a US consulate in Iran, the hospital personnel try to find the family directly. Through an Internet search, personnel find the patient's resume that includes contact information. The hospital reaches the patient's immediate family in Iran. Due to impracticality of rapid travel to the United States because of visa requirements, the patient's family uses the Internet to see their loved one on life support. This process results in strong bonds between the family and personnel. Having the family's trust, the hospital staff requests consent for organ transplantation, which is granted by the family. Five surgical teams from four states fly to the hospital, and successfully recover multiple organs from the patient. The patient's heart, lungs and kidneys are soon transplanted to seven patients in five states. The recipient of the heart is a 12-year-old girl.

Regardless of citizenship status, international organ donors can become actual donors (4,5). The complexities of cultural and logistical aspects of international organ

transplantation should not discourage the organ procurement personnel. High levels of motivation, commitment and altruism among personnel are keys to success. In both cases reported here, personnel have not lost hope and have succeeded in exploring all alternative ways to reach people who can provide consent for organ donation. In the first scenario, international affairs played a unique role. In the second case, the hospital staff's creativity, commitment and bonds with the donor's family defeated all barriers, including cultural differences, religious differences and broken ties between Iran and the United States.

A human is a human, irrespective of the nationality and citizenship. A donor is a donor, as well. Altruism is a resource that enhances procurement of international donors that may contribute to reducing organ shortage. A question is how we can enhance similar altruistic behaviors among our organ transplant personnel?

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## Disclosure

The author of this manuscript has no conflicts of interest to disclose as described by the *American Journal of Transplantation*.

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