

Hello,

My name is Bridget Kurysh. I am a twenty-eight year old female who has been on dialysis for over 9 years. I saw your notice in the paper regarding the public hearings to determine how the Government of Saskatchewan can increase the rate of organ donation and improve the effectiveness of the organ and tissue donation program.

I currently am on the waiting list for a kidney transplant in Saskatchewan and have been on it for many years. I am only four foot four inches tall, so therefore I need a child's kidney. This means I have to wait for a cadaver kidney. I know it is a hard thing for parents to think about, but being aware that if their child passes away their tissue and organs can be donated to help save up to eight lives and help up to 75 others with tissue donation should be communicated to them somehow.

One way to help facilitate this is implementing Donor Physicians into Saskatchewan Health Care. These Donor Physicians work with the ICU and transplant programs to educate, set up policy, and act as advocates for end-of-life choices & processes. They have been used in other health systems and have increased transplant numbers. Donor Physicians are credited as one reason Spain has one of the highest organ donation rates in the world.

Family doctors should also bring it up with all patients and offer handouts during regular clinic visits. They should be able to answer simple questions or at least be able to refer the patient to more information somewhere else. Being an organ and tissue donor should be a topic discussed and thought about by families and everyone even though it may be an uncomfortable topic. It is important family and friends know an individual's wishes. Most people don't know that even if they want to be an organ donor their families can veto their choice after they pass. So it is important for their wishes to be known.

Possibly implementing an online donor registry might help too. Other Canadian provinces have them and it would be a way for people to let their wishes be known to the health facilities if they don't have a health care directive or previously discussed them with their families.

Something as simple as having more ads in local newspapers or even T.V. commercials educating people about organ and tissue donation. The ads could also feature actual people waiting on donor lists and put some faces and names to this issue, this might make it easier for the public to connect with this issue. Some people don't know various simple facts that could be included too, such as that you can be a living donor for liver or kidney donations, or that the age range for donors is very wide. Making this information more widely known might increase donor numbers.

Another idea is so adopt presumed consent as a way to increase organ and tissue donations. This way people would have to opt out of being a donor, rather than opt in as they do in the current donor program. I know there have been studies done saying presumed consent doesn't increase donor numbers, but I really don't think Saskatchewan has anything to lose trying this approach. I for one would think it's worth looking at adopting.

My last idea is to include a box on income tax forms regarding organ and tissue donation. There could be a yes and no box on the cover of the form and each citizen would check off their choice. Their decision could then be put on file somewhere, or if that would be too costly nothing would have to be done with this information, but it would at least get people thinking about being an organ and tissue donor. It just needs to be more of an accepted topic to talk about and the more people are exposed to the idea I think the more likely it will be discussed.

Thank you for allowing the public's input on this topic. I think this is a really good idea and could be used in many other areas of government to help craft new policies or brainstorm ideas to help improve programs that affect Saskatchewan citizens in our everyday lives.

-Bridget Kurysh

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