

NATIONAL POTENTIAL DONOR AUDIT

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Background: UK Transplant's (UKT) national potential donor audit (PDA) began in January 2003, as part of a series of measures to improve organ donation.

The PDA aims to provide an up-to-date assessment of the potential for solid organ donation from Intensive Care Units (ICUs) throughout the UK. The audit will identify the number of patients who could be heartbeating or non-heartbeating solid organ donors and will establish the obstacles to donation.

Methods: Since January 2003, data have been collected by donor liaison nurses in the ICUs where they are in post (34) and by donor transplant co-ordinators, and/or link nurses in all other units. An audit form developed in collaboration with other appropriate personnel is being used. One form is completed for each patient death in an ICU. All completed forms are returned to UKT for data input, validation and analysis.

Results: An evaluation of data from April-June 2003 showed that 256 hospitals (309 ICUs) had reported at least one patient death. Of the 5,096 audited deaths, death was confirmed by brain stem tests in 278 (5%). In 34 (12%) of 278 families there was no record of any discussion of donation with relatives. Of the 244 patients for whom the possibility of organ donation was suggested to relatives, consent was given for 126 (52%) and not given for 118 (48%) patients. Of the 126 patients for whom consent was given, 114 (90%) became cadaveric heartbeating donors. A further nine non-heartbeating donors were identified during this period.

From this preliminary analysis, an overall relative refusal rate of 48% (95% confidence interval 42-54%) was observed. Relative refusal rates by former NHS region ranged from 37-63%. However, due to the small number of patients included in the analysis across regions, these results must be viewed with caution.

Conclusions: It is of concern that one of the main findings was a high relative refusal rate. We are looking at ways to address this and are currently analysing the data in more detail. However, once more validated data are available for analysis a truer picture should emerge.

UKT hopes that the PDA will continue to raise the profile of organ donation and heighten awareness of donation issues amongst critical care staff. It will also provide a realistic estimate of the true potential for organ donation and will allow both local and national obstacles to realising the potential to be identified.