

Letter to the Editor

Body Donation—Need of the Hour

Dear Editor ,

Cadavers are indispensable part of learning anatomy; a thorough knowledge of anatomy can be gained only by exploring a real human body. Cadavers are also used for skilled labs, for workshops and training of post graduates in the field of surgical sciences. New concepts of cadaveric lab/operation theatre are also emerging in the field of medical education. Medical institutions in the past have tried different methods of procuring cadavers like robbery murders and unearthing fresh dead bodies to addresses scarcity issues. To overcome all these issues the anatomy act was formulated.

ANATOMY ACT: This authorizes both government and private medical colleges to receive unclaimed bodies under police custody, for the purpose of the anatomical examination and dissection. The Mysore anatomy Act was later modified as Karnataka anatomy act in 1998. According to this act any unclaimed body can be handed over to an approved institution which is in the gazette by an authorized officer under whose custody the unclaimed body lies. Although different states have such similar acts the central Government has made no legislation regarding this.

With rapid mushrooming of medical colleges in the country and with the present colleges aiming at hike in medical college's seats, the source of unclaimed bodies may not be sufficient to match the need of different colleges. Ideal student cadaveric ratio was 10:1 which are present has changed to 20:1 (ranging between 8:1-50:1).an ideal ratio is existing only in 40% of institutes by a survey conducted in 2012 by Ashwini et al., Hence the need for voluntary body donation. Practicing of body donation has been in existence for many decades but has been in lime-light only from past few years. Data analysis has revealed that 70.9% of institutions in India have voluntary body donation and the average registrations

range from 80-100. Most of these donation functions at Institutional level none at district /state level.

Bodies not suitable for donation: Extreme emaciations/extreme obesity, extensive burns, contagious diseases like Hepatitis B, C and HIV are not suitable for body donation.

In order to promote voluntary donations many institutions attract donors by providing benefits in the form of free health checkups and concessions on lab investigations and honour them in some programs conducted by the institutions .These are some of the ways the institution expresses its gratitude to the donors. But of late many institutions have expressed that prospective donors do utilize these benefits but following their death the relatives try to meddle with the decision of donation or sometimes donors themselves change their decision on donating their body. This would go against the rule of the council on the ethical and judicial affairs of the American medical association which states that the individual interest in controlling the decision to donate his/her body is solely the donors rather than the family.

What can be done: This is the million dollar question one needs to answer. Increasing the public awareness through celebrities, mass media, hoardings, posters, organizing body donation campaigns needed to be carried out. Also educating medical students and professionals regarding the ALTRUISTIC ACT of body donation is very important. Educating the health care professionals in terms of identifying a potential body donor approaching the relatives can turn the legislation of mandatory choice to action.

PUBLIC USE ON DONATION: Various factors like demographic, cultural, altitudinal, religious associated with the willingness to donate the cadaveric and living organs effect the general public's opinion.



Many of them are ignorant of the body donation programme. And people who are aware feel that religious sentiments may come in their way of Body donation. Some feel that after donation their bodies may not be given due respect /may be misutilized.

All colleges should maintain a record of source of body, date of receipt, identification marks, photograph, and details of injuries if any. The dead body is the legitimate subject of the human emotion and every step should be taken to respect it as it is an individual birth rate.

Although they are many protechnology assisted methods of learning anatomy cadaveric dissection remains gold standard. Audiovisual aids and virtual dissection can only supplemented it and not replace it. Hence central government should formulate an act applicable to all states and issue guidelines for identifying unclaimed bodies.

Government should appoint as independent authority along with the police to monitor the disposal of all unclaimed dead bodies.

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