



Voluntary Body Donation - A Survey of Awareness

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Abstract

Background: Medical education and research require human cadavers for the purpose of study of human anatomy. The source of cadavers is most often unclaimed bodies and from voluntary donors; the latter being a scarce source. The choice to become a body donor is biased due to religious, cultural, social and moral factors.

Methods: The present study is questionnaire based, KAP (Knowledge, attitude & practice) study, carried among 1000 people in the age group of 25- 60 yrs.

Results: 78% study members knew the term body donation. Merely 25 % of them were aware that body donation is one of the method of dead body disposal & 75% mentioned about the traditional methods only. Only 4% of study members knew the correct time limit to donate the body.

Conclusions: Body donation is a generous and unselfish act for those who wish to be useful to living, even after death. There is need for creating awareness about 'Voluntary Body Donation' among general population.

Keywords: Body donation, Dissection, General population.

Introduction

Learning human anatomy is the basic requirement in the career of a medical professional. The subject of anatomy

always comes first in the medical curriculum and serves as the foundation for medical education. Cadaveric dissection has always been integral to studying anatomy. The importance of dissection on human cadavers for learning anatomy is well emphasized. The psycho-visuo-tactile experience of cadaver dissection is an unparalleled means to understand and retain the knowledge of human anatomy. ¹ Beside dissection, cadavers are also used for practicing as well as developing new surgical techniques. It also provides surgeons a simulating environment to polish their surgical skills. Neither books nor computers can replace body dissection in learning anatomy.²

In our country, such willed body donation programs are still in their infancy. The success of these programs depend on the ability of our health care professionals in motivating the people. ³ But, how much the healthcare professionals themselves are aware about body donation? Leave health care professionals, are the medical teachers aware? This question prompted us to undertake this survey with the aim to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding 'Body Donation' among the people in Rajasthan.

Material and Methods

The present study is questionnaire based, KAP (Knowledge, attitude & practice) study, carried among

1000 people in the age group of 25- 60 yrs. The teaching staff members of anatomy department were excluded. A structured questionnaire was administered after due consent by the people. The data was analyzed and percentages were calculated and represented graphically.

Results

78% study members knew the term body donation. Merely 25 % of them were aware that body donation is one of the method of dead body disposal & 75% mentioned about the traditional methods only. Only 4% of study members knew the correct time limit to donate the body.

Majority (96%) of study members were unaware about the process of body donation.

Only 4 % of study members were aware about the procedure of body donation and only 1% knew the Act which governs the body donation. 3 % knew that the death certificate is mandatory during body donation process.

Table 1: Documents required at the time of body donation

1 -Death Certificate -	3%
2 -Body donation form duly filled	2%

Table 2: Office bearers of body donation committee

1 Dean	4%
2 Professor & Head of anatomy Department	4%
3 Social Worker	2%

Only 4 % knew about the office bearers of body donation.

Table 3: Use of Donated Body

1 To learn anatomy by Dissection	5%
2 Anatomical Research	12%

It was observed that, 5 % of study members had clear Idea about the uses of donated body, 12% had incomplete idea.

Discussion

Anatomy i.e. the study of structure of human body is the basic yet one of the most important subjects studied by medical students. Cadaveric dissection has always been integral to studying anatomy. Though body donation is the preferred and major source for cadavers, the proportion of general population willing to donate body is meagre leading to scarcity of cadavers which affects anatomy teaching programs negatively.¹⁻³

To make up one's mind for body donation after death, even for the purpose of medical education is an extremely difficult decision across cultures. People often are reluctant to talk about death as they tend to believe that discussion about death may lead it to come soon.⁴ The most important reason for denial to 'body donation' in Indians is lack of awareness.

Though mass media is an effective way of communicating the message of body donation. The importance of mass media in propagating the message positively among the population cannot be neglected.⁵

The results of our study suggest that educating the general population and are in congruence with Saritha et al.³ Donation of body in the interest of medical education and research can always be considered as one's final gift which lasts for the next generations.

Conclusions

Body donation is a generous and unselfish act for those who wish to be useful to living, even after death. There is need for creating awareness about 'Voluntary Body Donation' among general population.

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