Religious Motivation for Living Donor Transplantation: A Global Survey and Systematic Review

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This study explores people’s religious motivations for organ donation in countries with high degrees of living donor transplantation.

BACKGROUND
The US leads the world in transplantation but the supply of organs still does not meet the demand. Increased living donor transplantation (LDT) can help meet the need for kidney and liver grafts. The US leads the world in transplantation but the supply of organs still does not meet the demand. Increased living donor transplantation (LDT) can help meet the need for kidney and liver grafts.

METHODS
Countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have increased LDT partly due to low DDT rates. Those surveyed in these countries expressed the wish to help relatives through LDT. Islam emphasizes the importance of saving human life but local religious concerns about the medical criteria for death, informed consent, and bodily integrity at death contributed to the low DDT rates. The principle of “necessity overriding prohibition” in the Qur’an has been invoked to describe the rise in LDT.

RESULTS
Eleven countries were found with LDT% higher than 50% (Table 1). 16 Surveys met the search criteria; Muslim countries were most predominant including Turkey (7), Saudi Arabia (5), and Pakistan (2). India and Mexico produced one paper each (Table 2). The surveys queried people of various backgrounds (religious, student, health professionals) about living “organ donation” and few commented specifically about the type of organ. Most queried living donation to a relative and only one about unrelated donation. No surveys concerning religion and LDT were found from populations in Sudan, Algeria, Philippines, Japan, Korea, or Israel.

Figure 1: Top 40 Countries for Kidney and Liver Transplant

Table 1: Countries by LDT%

Table 2: Countries by LDT%

Figure 2: PRISMA flow chart

DISCUSSION
Countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have increased LDT partly due to low DDT rates. Those surveyed in these countries expressed the wish to help relatives through LDT. Islam emphasizes the importance of saving human life but local religious concerns about the medical criteria for death, informed consent, and bodily integrity at death contributed to the low DDT rates. The principle of “necessity overriding prohibition” in the Qur’an has been invoked to describe the rise in LDT.

Other Islamic countries may be able to advance transplantation through LDT as well. In India, Hindus believe in Dharma (righteous living) and Daan (selfless giving) which promotes LDT. Countries with presumed consent legislation (“opt out”) like Spain, Portugal, and Austria tend to be Catholic and tend to have higher DDT but could advance LDT through local religious groups. A Jewish-based community organization in Israel, Maimon Chaim, has helped facilitate living kidney donor transplantation (Wasser, 2018). Jewish organizations in the US are doing similar work. The US has large Muslim and Hindu populations which could be similarly organized to increase LDT.

The limitations of the review were using a single search engine and a limited time period. The experience of minority religions within a dominant religion society were not explored. The differential between kidney and liver donation was not explored. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and transplant teams in countries with religious diversity will benefit from understanding religious motivation for LDT. Appreciation for diverse belief systems may contribute to increasing LDT.

REFERENCES


@TransplantPsych

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