

Experts sound alarm over country's 'dismally low' number of deceased kidney donors

Jun 13, 2018

- *The number of patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in the country needing a kidney transplant in order to survive is increasing tremendously. Unfortunately, the number of transplants from deceased organ donors remains dismally low.*
- *The REGALO Organ Donation Advocacy is calling on Filipinos to give of them selves so that others may live by signing their Organ Donor Card and keeping the card with them at all times.*

Quezon City, June 13, 2018 – One Filipino dies due to kidney failure every hour, and this figure will further increase unless more people in the country decide to become organ donors.

This was the dire warning issued by the Renal Gift Allowing Life for Others (REGALO), a multi-stakeholder alliance advocating for organ donation and kidney transplantation, during the National Kidney Month media briefing held at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTi).

The number of Filipinos with kidney failure, technically known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD), is increasing tremendously primarily due to uncontrolled hypertension and type 2 diabetes, according to Dr. Romina Danguilan, NKTi Deputy Director for Medical Education and Research, and REGALO Organizing Committee Head. "In order to survive, ESRD patients must undergo either dialysis or kidney transplantation. Kidney transplantation is considered the treatment of choice for many ESRD patients. Quality of life and survival are better in kidney transplant recipients than in patients who are treated with dialysis," Dr. Danguilan explained.

Unfortunately, the number of patients transplanted from deceased donors in the country remains "dismally low", according to NKTi Executive Director Dr. Rosemarie R. Lique. "In 2016, there were 438 patients transplanted from living kidney donors, a figure that has been relatively stable since 2009. In contrast, there were 64 transplants from deceased organ donors in 2009, which peaked at 90 in 2011 and progressively decreased to 42 in 2016. Last year, the number of kidney transplants from deceased donors in the country dropped to 20."

Dr. Enrique Ona, who served as NKTi Executive Director for 11 years prior to his appointment as Health Secretary in 2010, revealed that in previous years the NKTi received an average of 30 deceased organ donors per year yielding 60 donated kidneys. "This year to date, the NKTi has received only 3 deceased organ donors."

Due to the lack of deceased organ donors, patients requiring a liver transplant go to countries like India to get a transplanted liver from their parents, although this operation is performed in the Philippines, Dr. Ona added.

According to Dr. Danguilan, one deceased organ donor yields two kidneys that benefit two transplant patients. She explained that solid organs like kidney and liver are transplanted in the Philippines from heart-beating deceased donors who have been declared brain dead. "These organs cannot be transplanted after the patient has been declared dead. Only the eyes can be harvested after death for transplantation. Non-heart-beating transplantation is performed in other countries but we don't do the operation here for now."

“All organized religions support organ donation, typically considering it a generous act that is the individual's choice. If you donate your organs after you die, you could save and improve the lives of many Filipinos, especially those with kidney failure,” said Ms. Christine Fajardo, Corporate Affairs Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

REGALO is calling on Filipinos to give of themselves so that others may live by signing their Organ Donor Card and keeping the card with them at all times. The general public is encouraged to click on <http://nkti.gov.ph/images/HOPE/Organ-Donor-Card.pdf> to download and print the Organ Donor Card or visit the REGALO Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RegaloOrganDonationAdvocacy/>. Persons with a valid driver's license may also tick the “Organ Donor Option” at the back of the license to express their willingness to donate all their organs or just a specific organ.

“Be a hero, be an organ donor and carry an organ donor card,” Dr. Danguilan said.

Formed in 2016, the REGALO Organ Donation Advocacy aims to raise awareness on organ donation and encourage Filipinos to GIVE of themselves through organ donation; CARE enough to sign up and become a willing organ donor; and to SHARE what they have done with their family and friends. REGALO is supported by the Maria Corazon Torres Y Javier (MCTJ) Foundation, Kidney Foundation of the Philippines (KFP), and Kidney Transplant Association of the Philippines (KITAP), the Transplantation Society of the Philippines in partnership with NKTi, and Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

About National Kidney Month

By virtue of PD 184 declaring June as *National Kidney Month* in the *Philippines*, and declaring the NKTi as the lead Hospital in the celebration, NKTi leads the whole nation in celebrating awareness of kidney diseases and their prevention.

About Maria Corazon Torres Y Javier (MCTJ) Foundation

Established in 1991, the MCTJ Foundation serves as a coordinating body for organ donors and recipients who will undergo organ transplantation. It also secures and manages donations from kind-hearted individuals and organizations in order to provide financial support to underprivileged beneficiaries.

About the Kidney Foundation of the Philippines (KFP)

The KFP was established more than 40 years ago with the primary mandate of delivering specialized health services to patients suffering from kidney and other related diseases. It established the first dialysis facility in the country and works in partnership with other hospital facilities in catering the medical needs of patients who qualify for kidney transplantation operation. It has the Kidney Care Assistance Program (KidCAP), sustained by the institution's fund-raising activities, to support dialysis and transplant patients in need of financial subsidy.

About the Kidney Transplant Association of the Philippines (KITAP)

Founded in 1985, KITAP is dedicated to uplifting the lives and protecting the rights of kidney transplant recipients, donors, and the immediate family of recipients. It currently has 1,400 members.



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