



Chicago's Leading Bilingual Newspaper

The need for organ and tissue donors

Since Aug. 1 marked National Minority Donor Awareness Day, I'm writing to let people know why it's crucial to sign up or re-register to become organ and tissue donors.

In the U. S., there's a tremendous need for organ and tissue donors. Nationally, nearly 100,000 people are waiting for transplants. Every day, 18 people die waiting for transplants nationwide. Over half of the transplant candidates waiting for organs and tissue in Illinois and across the nation are minorities.

Did you know that the Hispanic community tops the list of minorities in need of liver transplants, yet sadly, they make up the smallest percentage of donors nationwide?

Although donated organs and tissue can be transplanted across racial and ethnic groups, in liver transplantation, genetic makeup or tissue type play a significant role between the organ donor and the transplant recipient. Liver transplants within similar ethnic groups can improve success rates.

Many people have fears about becoming organ and tissue donors due to lack of information. Some people feel that donation is morally or religiously incorrect, yet almost all major western and eastern religions support organ and tissue donation.

Other people feel that if doctors know the patient is a donor, they won't do everything possible to save the patient's life. This is not the case. The physicians trying to save lives are completely separate from the transplant surgeons.

It's important that we educate ourselves to the enormous benefit that organ donation can have on our society. There's no better gift than the gift of life. One donor can potentially save or enhance the lives of more than 25 people.

Become an organ and tissue donor today. Register by visiting www.lifegoeson.com; going to any Illinois state driver's facility or calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at (800) 210-2106. Remember if you signed up prior to Jan. 1, 2006, you must re-register to make sure your wish is honored.

Jesse White

Illinois Secretary of State