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College Students Can be the Key to America's Organ Shortage

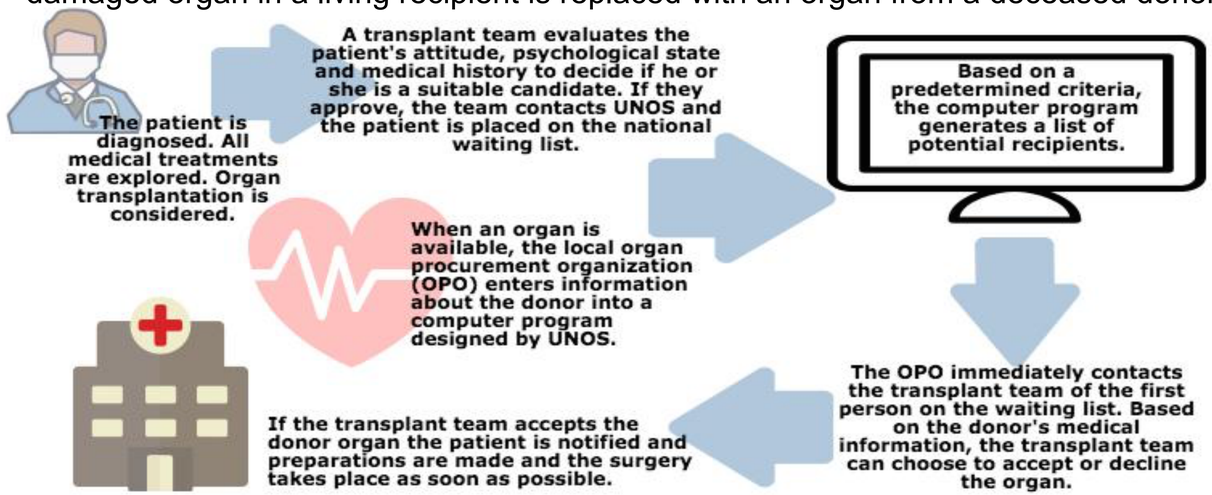
Bioethics Research Showcase

Amanda Finnell, Hannah Smith, Katharine Mangialardi

GU GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Organ Donation Background

A deceased donor organ transplant is a operation that occurs when a failing or damaged organ in a living recipient is replaced with an organ from a deceased donor.



Individuals are only consistently solicited to indicate their willingness to become a deceased organ donor at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). ***There needs to be additional opportunities for organ donor enrollment to gain the organ donors needed to alleviate this organ shortage.***

Students are the Answer

Table 5. Willing to Grant Permission for Organ Donation on an Organ Donor Registry Among Those Who Have Not Yet Registered

		Age			
	All	18-34	35-54	55-65	66+
Sig Code*		C	D	E	F
Yes	***60.1***	76.9 DEF	53.8	56.7	46.7
No	***29.2***	14.1	38.0 C	29.0	38.3 C
N of Cases	**829**	**194**	**252**	**196**	**182**

(Percentages) 2012 National Survey of Organ Donation Attitudes and Behaviors

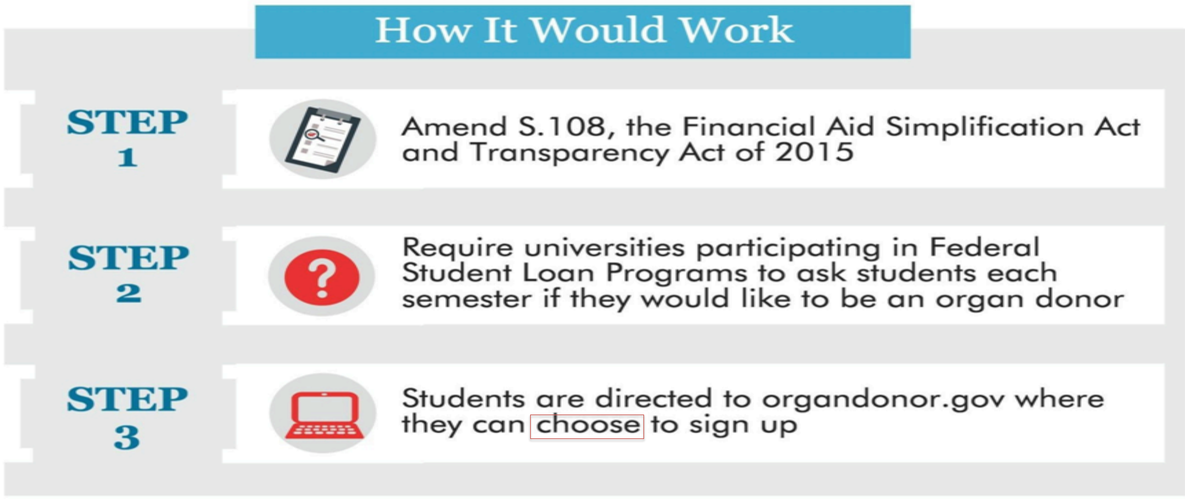
In Fall 2014, 21 million students were expected to attend American colleges and universities. According to the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network (OPTN), **71% of college students are not registered organ donors.** However, Americans of ages 18-34, the age bracket that represents the college student demographic, have consistently given the most organs (deceased donors) since 2011 - In 2014, almost 2,300 organs were donated from this age group - **and according to the OPTN, 76.9% of those not registered expressed that they would be willing to register to become organ donors.**

Student Organ Donation Program: The Process

Of the reasoning respondents gave most often for "Why aren't you willing to sign up to be a donor?", 30% of responses were:

"I haven't thought about it…" or "need more information or a better understanding of it".

By requiring Universities to pose the question of organ donor status to all students by **directing students to organdonor.gov**, students will be given the *opportunity* to gain more information on the issue before *choosing* to enroll as an organ donor.



Conclusion

The primary ethical dilemmas surrounding organ transplantation arise from the shortage of available organs. Individuals are only actively solicited to become organ donors when they interact with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). There needs to be additional opportunities for organ donor enrollment to gain the organ donors needed to alleviate this organ shortage. **Georgetown University is currently working to institute a pilot program to pose this question to students. The results and effectiveness will be reported to national organ donation advocates with the intention to advance this potential solution nationally.**

References: **1.** US Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS). "2012 National Survey of Organ Donation Attitudes and Behaviors". September 2013. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). **2.** Organ Procurement & Transplantation Network. USHHS. HRSA. OPTN.Transplant.HRSA.gov **3.** Organdonor.gov."Donate the Gift of Life." USHHS. HRSA.

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