Brain Death and Organ Donation

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Every day, significant number of people die due to failure of one organ in the body or the other. One of the life saving measure for these kind of patients is organ transplantation. The success of human organ transplant is steadily being improved. The increase in mortality and morbidity rate is basically attributable to unavailability of suitable organs in time.

Receiving a human organ from a healthy, living donor is not always possible, and exposes a healthy person to risk. So, receiving healthy organs from a dead person will be ideal, as the donor is already dead and many organs can be removed from one donor.

Still there is a lot of confusion in understanding the concept of brain death with beating heart. This concept is not widely understood yet. Traditionally we accept death as stoppage of functioning of heart. However, studies over the years have shown that death occurs with irreversible changes in brain, although the heart may continue to beat for sometime beyond that.

The heart has its own pace maker independent of brain, as long as it has oxygen it continues to beat. So the brain can be dead yet the heart may continue to beat. Once the brain is dead, the patient is already dead. Since the patient is already dead, the health professionals cannot kill him again by removing the respiratory support. The respiratory support gives only the appearance of live person at a high cost. Medico-legally, the patient is pronounced as dead on the basis of brain death with the heart still beating.

Determining death of a client is difficult with all tubings and respiratory support.

Death is indicated by:
- No pupil response to light
- No unassisted breathing.
- No response to stimuli.

Organ Donation

Organ transplant gives life to another person.

The body parts like heart, liver, lungs, pancreas, kidney, bowel, eyes can be donated. The organs can be removed safely without causing pain to the patient since the person is already dead.

Criteria for Organ Donation

The persons willing to donate ought to meet the following conditions:
- They should be below 60 years of age but above one year of age.
- The donor must be free from any communicable or infectious disease.
- Organs of the donor must be functioning normally.

References

1. Ellen Barken; President, Neuro Sciences nursing Consultanti, Neuro Science Nursing-A Spectrum of Care", 3rd edn, Mosbys

LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur (Assam): The Department of Nursing, LGBRIMH organised a workshop during 18-27 September last year on Promotion of Mental Health: Nursing Perspectives for the nursing personnel. The chief guest at the inaugural session was Dr Kiran Borgohain, Joint Director-Nursing, Assam. Dr K Chakraborty, Senior Physician was the guest of honour. Others to grace the occasion included Dr SK Deuri, Director LGBRIMH and the principals of various schools of Nursing. Mrs Arunyoti Boruah coordinated the 10-day workshop, which comprised of lectures, demonstrations, group activities, etc. covering various aspects of mental health promotion from nursing perspectives.