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DONOR ACTION PROGRAMME

The event of the century

Success has its price....

Alleviating the donor shortage

The Donor Action Programme

Programme status

Benefits of Donor Action

To know more about Donor Action

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The event of the century

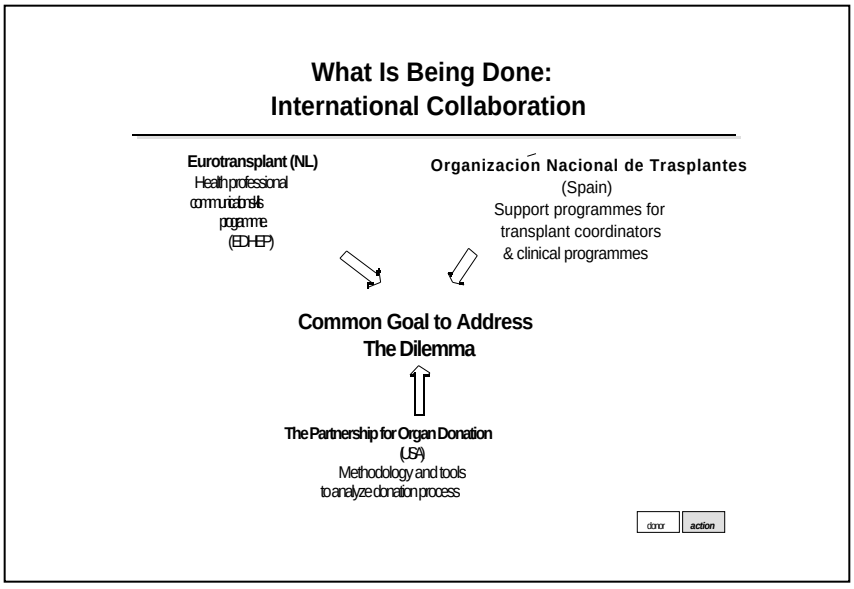
Organ transplantation has been described as the event of the century. In fact, transplantation has developed from a “high-risk” treatment of last resort in the early days into a highly successful routine procedure. Advances in surgical techniques and the development of drugs to control rejection have made it possible to carry out transplants of many organs and tissues in a large number of patients. Solid organ and tissue transplantation has become a standard therapy and each year many thousands of transplants are performed worldwide.

Success has its price.....

Despite all the advances made in transplantation and the broad acceptance of this treatment by the medical community and society, the critical shortage of organ donors remains the major obstacle for the full development of transplants. This imposes a severe limit to the number of patients who can benefit from this treatment.

Although transplantation saves thousands of lives and enhances the quality of life of thousands more, many people will stay on waiting lists for or remain on renal replacement therapy (dialysis) because the organ supply falls drastically short of actual demand. More than 80,000 people in Europe and the U.S. are on transplant waiting lists and about one in five will die before an organ becomes available.

Alleviating the donor shortage



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In 1994, three organisations with extensive experience in organ donation agreed to pool their expertise to collaborate in an international initiative to increase organ donation.

Eurotransplant International Foundation (The Netherlands) has spearheaded the European Donor Hospital Education Programme (EDHEP), an initiative to provide healthcare professionals with communication skills to make the donation request in a caring and sensitive manner.

Organización Nacional de Trasplantes (Spain), which has been particularly successful in increasing organ donation rates in Spain through training and support programmes for hospital transplant co-ordinators as responsible for the overall donation process.

The Partnership for Organ Donation (USA) has developed methodologies to assess donation potential and a protocol for requesting donation.

These three organisations are committed to a common goal: alleviating the organ shortage. In a review of factors affecting the donation situation, the group looked at hospital procedures, public perception and the importance of communication about donation issues in the family.

The review revealed that the average hospital misses a significant number of its potential doors: many potential donors are not identified and many families are not presented with option of donation.

The Working Group decided to focus its effort on an initiative to help hospitals achieve their donation potential through improved practices. Experience from both Spain and the USA confirms that consistent use of an optimal donation process can lead to a dramatic increase in donation.

The international initiative, begun under the working title, “The Seville Project”, has evolved into a concrete programme called Donor Action. The international development of Donor Action is supported by Novartis Pharma. In March 1998 the three founder organisations established the Donor Action Foundation, a non-profit Foundation, which now manages the implementation of Donor Action internationally.

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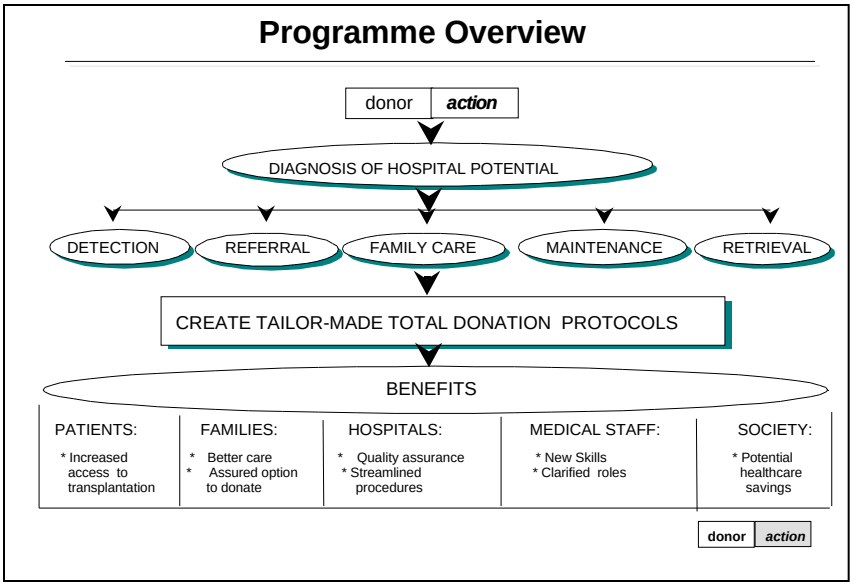
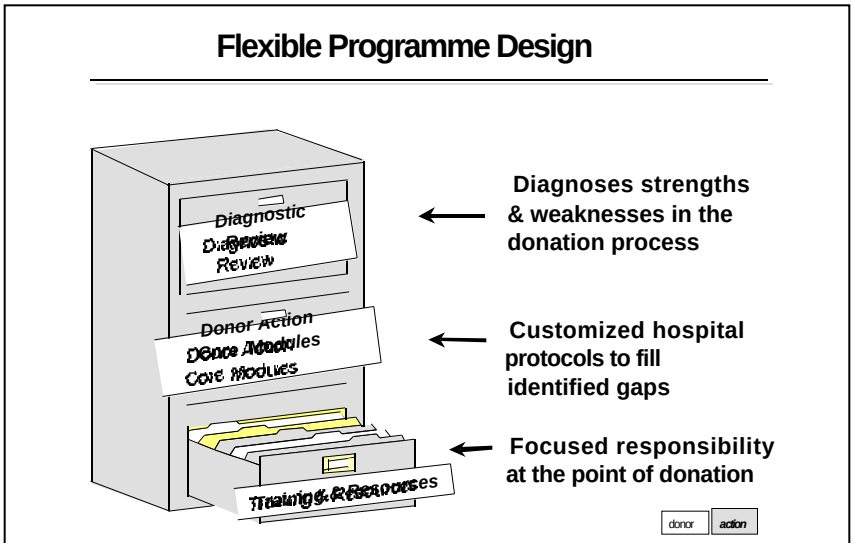
The Donor Action Programme

The Donor Action Programme ensures that all potential donors are identified and that all families are approached about donation in a caring and sensitive manner. Programme materials are designed for easy adaptation to meet diverse national and individual hospital needs, regardless of language and cultural differences. The “Donor Action” initiative gives hospitals a methodology to diagnose the obstacles for effective organ donation. It offers the tools, resources and guidelines and skills to solve any identified problems in the donation process.





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Donor Action Programme status

To ensure that programme materials are effective and appropriate, Donor Action pilot evaluations were started in 1995 in eleven hospitals in the Netherlands, Spain the UK and Canada. The preliminary findings of the diagnostic phase of the programme provided baseline information on donation practices in the pilot hospitals.

Diagnostic Review Methodology:

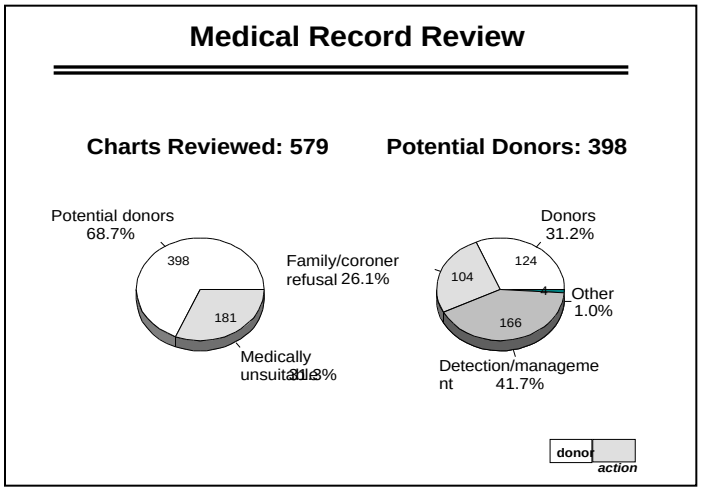
1. A retrospective Medical Record Review to determine a hospital's potential for donation and discover at what point in the process potential donors are "lost".

2. Hospital Attitude Survey to determine staff's attitudes and knowledge about donation and self reported skills, confidence and educational requirements in performing a range of donation roles.

3. Donor Action System Database to analyse and report the data

Results:

Medical Record Review in Pilot Hospitals: Aggregated Data



Of 579 medical charts reviewed. MRR identified 398 potential donors. In a significant number of cases potential donors were not identified.

Medical Record Review can effectively identify donation potential and areas for improvement.

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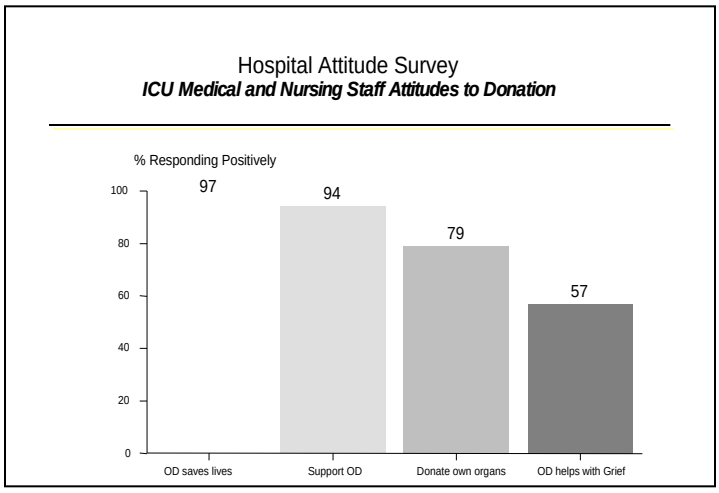
Hospital Attitude Survey in Pilot Hospitals.
2129 medical and nursing ICU staff returned anonymous questionnaires.

ICU Staff Attitudes

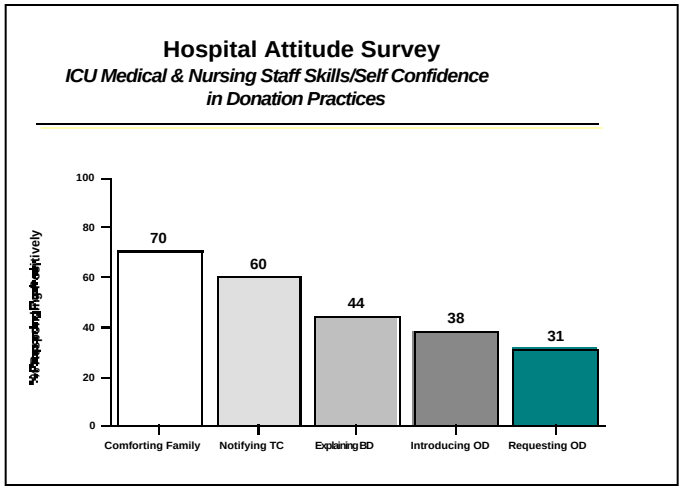


Questions

1. Do you believe organ donation saves other peoples lives?
2. What is your general attitude to donation of organs/tissues for transplantation?
3. Would you donate some of your organs/tissues after death?
4. Bo you believe that donation can help families cope with grief?

The results reveal that the majority support organ donation and believe it saves the lives of others.

ICU Staff Self Reported Skills/Self Confidence in Donation Roles



Questions

Do you feel comfortable in the following situation?

1. Comforting/supporting grieving families
2. Notifying a transplant co-ordinator about a potential donor
3. Explaining brain death to a family
4. Introducing the subject of organ donation
5. Asking a family to make a decision about donation

Many ICU staff do not feel comfortable when performing tasks close to donation.

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Meeting future demand

Training courses for other countries interested in implementing the programme started in 1997. Future courses in 1999 will meet the increasing demand for Donor Action worldwide.

*** (Insert updated worldwide map (Donor Action 1995 to 1998) here.) ***

Benefits of Donor Action

1 To waiting list patients

An increase in the number of organ donors will help to close the growing gap between available organs and need. Currently, two to three times as many patients are waiting for transplants than actually receive them.

2 To families

Donation can often help families to cope with grief. When the option for donation is not presented, families lose the opportunity to receive the consolation of being a donor family. An effective donation process ensures that all families whose relatives meet the criteria for donation are sensitively and thoughtfully offered the option of donation.

3 To medical professionals

Improved hospital donation policies, procedures and practices translate into the ability of medical professionals to save lives and improve quality of life for their patients. Improved practices clarify roles and responsibilities of hospital staff and ensure a dedicated resource to families.

4 To society

Increased donation means increased access to life-saving treatment and potential savings for long term medical care, particularly for patients now receiving dialysis treatment.

To know more about Donor Action

Further information is available from:

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