



MEDIA RELEASE

August 6, 2008
For Immediate Release

Organ donation helps families of donors says new BC study *New research shows psychological benefits to families of organ donors*

Vancouver, BC – A new BC research study recently published in *Clinical Transplantation* provides compelling evidence to suggest that families of deceased organ donors actually benefit from the knowledge that their loved one donated their organs.

“This important study suggests that the families of deceased patients benefit from organ donation, which helps to heal – not exacerbate – their feelings of grief and depression,” says Dr. Eric Yoshida of BC Transplant, one of the study’s authors. “Knowing this, by not offering the opportunity to proceed with donation, we may be denying the families of potential organ donors real benefit. I am deeply impressed, and most appreciative, that almost all of the donor families reported that they would make the same decision if they had to do it again.”

The purpose of this 5-year retrospective, multi-disciplinary study was to explore the effects of organ donation on the bereavement process for organ donor families, by measuring indicators such as depression, grief and post-traumatic stress. Despite the standardization of transplantation as a treatment for organ failure over the past 20 years, little is known about the effect, whether positive or negative, on the families whose loved ones have donated.

To try and gain some understanding of the impact of donation, confidential questionnaires were sent to the next of kin of 196 families of deceased donors with questions related to their experiences and bereavement. Taking into account the surveys that were sent to incorrect/outdated addresses, the response rate was 46%, with interesting results from the 73 completed surveys.

Pia Henriksson’s son, Len, donated his organs when he suffered a fatal aneurism six years ago. “It was devastating to lose Len so suddenly and unexpectedly” says Pia, “and every day has been a struggle to accept his loss in our lives. But in the darkest moments, when I think of the five individuals whose lives were saved by Len’s generosity, it’s the one thing that has offered true comfort. Knowing that something positive came from our loss somehow makes it seem less meaningless.”

Seventy-seven percent of participants in the study had previously discussed organ donation with their loved one—a fact that definitely made the decision to donate much easier. Seventy-one percent wanted some good to come from a tragedy, and more than 97% of respondents would make the same decision again. More importantly, the majority of the families stated they felt comforted by the donation process; these families tended to report fewer symptoms of depression.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Ken Donohue
Director of Communications
BC Transplant
604.877.2170
Ken_Donohue@bcts.hnet.bc.ca

About the study

The study, *Exploring the psychological effects of deceased organ donation on the families of the organ donors*, was published in the May/June issue of *Clinical Transplantation*, 2008. Primary Investigators on the study are Shaila J. Merchant, University of British Columbia; Eric M. Yoshida, & Elsie Cheung, BC Transplant.

About BC Transplant

BC Transplant is an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. Over the past four decades, more than 4,000 British Columbians have received a life-saving organ transplant.

Organ donation saves lives. Register your decision about organ donation on BC's Organ Donor Registry. Hundreds of British Columbians are waiting. What are you waiting for? Register at www.transplant.bc.ca or call 1.800.663.6189.