

# PROMOTING ORGAN DONATION IN RUSSIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Transplantation helps to save the lives of patients with end-stage diseases of the liver, heart, lungs, and kidney. **Objective:** to study the strategies for advancing the idea of organ donation in the Russian Federation. **Materials and methods.** Scholarly publications by Russian researchers on the issue at hand. The study's methodology was based on application of general and specific scientific methods of theoretical analysis. **Results.** An assessment of how opportunities were used to legitimately promote the idea of donation was conducted. **Conclusion.** Modern ways and methods of promoting the idea of organ donation will help to introduce into public attention the importance of organ donation for transplantation.

*Keywords:* organ transplantation, deceased donation, donor.

## INTRODUCTION

Promotion of the idea of organ donation has become a cornerstone in the advancement of solid organ transplantation programs in Russia [1]. There has been a consistent year-on-year increase in the number of transplant procedures, with 3,057 organ transplants performed in 2023 alone [2]. The establishment of new transplant centers and programs across the Russian Federation has further enhanced transplant activity, expanded waiting lists, and improved access to high-tech medical care for the population [2].

The growth in the number of transplant centers, professional training of physicians across various specialties, and active educational initiatives in the field of organ transplantation and donation have all contributed to shaping a positive public perception of this type of medical care. These efforts support the internal acceptance of transplantation, foster an understanding of its social significance, and underscore its vital role in modern healthcare systems [1].

**Objective:** to examine current approaches to promoting the idea of organ donation in the Russian Federation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Analysis of Russian scholarly publications on the promotion of the idea of organ donation. Using general theoretical methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization), general scientific approaches (comparative legal analysis), and specific scientific methods (concretization, comparative jurisprudence), an analysis of Russian scholarly publications on the promotion of the idea of organ donation in Russia and abroad was

conducted. This analysis considered the current legal frameworks and prevailing social realities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both the state and society are faced with a critical challenge: instilling in the public consciousness the importance, humanitarian nature, and significance of organ donation. In this context, the idea of addressing the problem of organ shortage through advancement and popularization of living donation warrants broader public and academic discourse.

As Rustamov and Turaeva emphasized, the primary objective of any form of propaganda is to shape public opinion and establish a life position that aligns with the interests of a particular subject [3]. Based on its intended impact, propaganda can be classified into two categories: constructive, which unites citizens around universally recognized values, and destructive, which fosters anti-humanist beliefs [3].

Based on the ways of disseminating knowledge and forming beliefs, the promotion of organ donation can be categorized into three main forms: oral (live communication, radio, television), print (publications in mass media), and virtual (Internet portals, websites, social networks).

The oral form – such as lectures, discussions, or meetings with healthcare professionals – involves direct, personal communication. This format allows for a more flexible and adaptive engagement with the audience, depending on their mood, level of awareness, and openness to the subject.

Dissemination of information through print media can reach a wide audience, although it primarily influences

the older and middle-aged population. Oral communication offers opportunities like thematic TV and radio programs featuring public figures, celebrities, and athletes, that would promote the idea of organ donation. The creation of documentary and feature films addressing this topic also holds strong potential for impact.

In the digital sphere, social networks offer a particularly powerful tool for reaching younger and middle-aged audiences. Bloggers, especially those covering topics related to health and lifestyle, act as opinion leaders with vast subscriber bases often numbering in the hundreds of thousands or even millions.

Each mode of communication serves a specific purpose. Oral communication fosters personal engagement and helps dismantle psychological barriers, such as fear or cultural taboos surrounding organ donation. Traditional media, particularly print and broadcast, aims to convey the broader social and ethical importance of organ donation to a large audience. Digital media and social networks help normalize and popularize the topic.

In summary, oral communication makes the topic discussable, traditional media makes it socially relevant and supported, while social media makes it culturally appealing.

In addition, the role of the media in promoting organ donation cannot be underestimated. Well-executed information campaigns that feature compelling, real-life stories of transplant recipients, people of various ages who have received a second chance at life, have the potential to significantly shift public attitudes toward transplantation, presenting it as an essential and life-affirming aspect of modern medicine. Social networks serve as a powerful platform in this regard, enabling broad outreach and formation of active, engaged communities that support the idea of donation.

In accordance with article 8 of the Law of the Russian Federation dated December 22, 1992 No. 4180-I "On the Transplantation of Human Organs and (or) Tissues", there is a legal presumption of consent for deceased organ donation in Russia [4]. However, in practice, relatives of the deceased often object to autopsy and organ retrieval based on personal convictions or religious beliefs.

For example, according to a study by Reshetnikov conducted at the Volga Region Organ and Tissue Donation Coordination Center, relatives of potential donors were asked for consent to retrieve organs for transplantation. These conversations were conducted with the aim of preventing potential conflicts. Out of 124 individuals approached, only 79 (63.7%) gave their consent, while 45 (36.3%) refused [5]. Given that a single organ donor can potentially save up to seven lives, the refusal to retrieve organs from 45 individuals could mean that as many as 315 critically ill patients were deprived of life-saving transplantation.

In his conclusions, Reshetnikov emphasized that the most important factor influencing public attitudes toward

organ donation is the level of awareness about the humanity of transplantology and the vital role this medical field plays in saving lives [5].

In his paper, Reznik outlined the key stages in advancing what he termed the "concept of the sociology of posthumous donation". These include: (1) conducting sociological research involving focus groups, such as medical students, physicians from various fields, and professionals engaged in donor programs; (2) developing standardized informational and educational materials; and (3) disseminating knowledge about postmortem organ donation as a form of social interaction [6].

The study of spiritual, moral, and traditional religious views among the Russian population reveals several factors that hinder citizens' willingness to participate in organ donation. One of the identified issues is the fragmented legal regulation surrounding the promotion of organ donation through social advertising.

Given that Orthodox Christianity and Islam are the most commonly practiced religions in Russia, understanding the perspectives of these faith traditions on organ donation is of particular importance for the effective promotion of donation initiatives.

Some studies have explored the influence of religious beliefs and social attitudes on organ donation in Russia. For instance, Kochetkov and Zudin conducted a questionnaire-based survey at a city hospital in Nizhny Novgorod Oblast to assess attitudes toward deceased organ donation programs. Among the 130 patients surveyed, 75.4% identified as religious. Notably, within this group, the willingness to sign consent for deceased organ donation was significantly lower compared to non-religious respondents [8].

A more recent study titled "Readiness and Attitude to Types of Donation Among youth" (a mass survey in Kazan, 2023) found that while 70% of young respondents expressed a generally positive attitude toward donation, only 53% confirmed their personal readiness to become a donor [9].

It is important to note that these religions exert considerable influence not only on believers but also on societal values as a whole. As such, the inclusion of religious leaders in public education campaigns about the significance and humanitarian value of organ donation can be a vital component in overcoming resistance and increasing public support [7].

It is evident that raising public awareness about organ donation requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. A key component is the implementation of educational campaigns within academic institutions, where students can acquire fundamental knowledge about organ transplantation and understand the societal importance of donation. Integration of specialized courses and interactive activities into the educational curriculum can foster a positive attitude toward organ donation among young people, promoting it as an individually responsible and

socially supported practice aimed at preserving health, extending active life, and reinforcing human solidarity.

Finally, it is necessary to develop specialized institutions and support programs that would provide guidance and counseling to both potential donors and their families. Ensuring transparency in the donation process, upholding legal safeguards, and embracing innovative technologies in the field of individual donation can significantly enhance public trust, ultimately saving more lives.

The analysis of scientific literature has identified a promising avenue for enhancing public awareness of the importance and necessity of organ donation: the organization and implementation of educational and informational activities aimed at shaping the public's understanding of organ donation.

In this context, it is crucial to single out the implementation of specialized programs. These programs consist of a series of initiatives designed to provide as many people as possible with accurate and reliable information about organ donation and transplantation.

Educational projects should become a central component of efforts to develop transplant programs. Their goal is to disseminate accurate knowledge about organ transplantation, the patients who rely on it, and the diseases for which organ transplants offer the only hope of survival. These projects should also work to dispel myths surrounding donation and promote the importance of postmortem donation [1].

In many countries around the world, including Brazil, Italy, Spain, Japan, Singapore, Germany, and France, social advertising promoting organ donation is an ongoing effort, particularly targeting young people. Printed visual materials are produced and displayed in public spaces and educational institutions. Examples of such campaigns include posters with messages like "Give Life", "Save Seven Lives", and "Become a Hero. Be an Organ Donor" [10].

In Kazan, in 2024, the All-Russian Exhibition of Social Advertising on Organ Donation, titled "The Real Power is Inside You", was held to raise public awareness about patients waiting for organ transplants [11].

The official portal of the Russian Ministry of Health has a dedicated section on bone marrow and organ donation for transplantation in the section "Organ donation for transplantation", where people can ask questions, read the latest news, and learn about patient stories [1].

The information resource "National Association in the Field of Donation and Transplantology" (<https://nadi.ru/>) features social advertising in the form of animated mini-movies highlighting the importance of organ donation, such as "Life is the Best Gift", "Thank You, Donor!", "Leaving, I Give You Life", and "Transplantation? I Am for It!" These videos, along with real stories of individuals who became organ donors after sudden death, emphasize how they saved lives [12].

Additionally, the activities of various non-profit organizations deserve recognition. For instance, the charity foundation "Life as a Miracle" supports children waiting for or undergoing liver transplants, while the charity organization "Own Atmosphere" aids individuals in need of lung transplants. The public organization "NEFRO-LIGA" brings together patients with kidney diseases, those undergoing dialysis, and individuals in recovery after kidney transplants, along with their families. The association "RusTransplant" offers vital information for patients, and NEFRO-LIGA continues its support for kidney disease patients and their families.

Shumakov National Medical Research Center of Transplantology and Artificial Organs is a flagship in the field of transplantology in Russia. The Center's management and staff actively promote public awareness by organizing press conferences, educational lectures, and public events dedicated to transplantation and organ donation. It plays a key role in initiatives such as the nationwide "Donor Day" campaign across various regions of the Russian Federation and the All-Russian Transplant Games for individuals living with transplanted organs. In collaboration with the Life as a Miracle Foundation, the Center has also launched online platforms like "Пропечень.рф" and "100 Questions to a Transplantologist", with project answers broadcast in the Moscow subway [1].

Demonstrating medical achievements not only confirms that organ donation saves lives and restores health – enabling recipients to live fully, work, raise families, and enjoy life – but also helps ordinary citizens understand the profound social challenges faced by people with end-stage organ failure, when the only chance for survival is transplantation. Initiatives such as the publication of patient stories in the media, as well as themed photo exhibitions in Moscow parks and on the grounds of the Shumakov Center, allow the public to witness the transformative power of modern transplantation and appreciate the societal value of organ donation.

## CONCLUSION

Promoting the idea of organ donation is a complex yet vitally important educational endeavor. It involves targeted and systematic efforts by public organizations to disseminate scientific knowledge and shape spiritual and moral values rooted in the recognition of the life-saving importance of organ donation. Despite the sensitivity of the topic, its deeply humane goals underscore the necessity of open and thoughtful public dialogue.

The creation of well-crafted social advertising on organ donation has proven to be an effective tool for strengthening positive public opinion on this issue in the Russian Federation [10]. The analysis conducted supports the conclusion that it is both timely and advisable to enhance existing educational and informational efforts. Moreover, the development of new platforms

and projects that consistently highlight the value and necessity of donation will help foster a more informed and supportive public attitude, ultimately increasing the willingness of the Russian population to embrace the idea of organ donation.

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