2022 March Health Notes by Evelyn Ames Being an Organ Donor

Organ donation is the process when a person allows an organ of one's own to be removed and transplanted to another person, legally, either by consent while the donor is alive or dead with the consent of the next of kin. The world of organ donation and transplantation has a language all its own. The glossary at The Health Resources and Services Adm provides a glossary of terminology. For example: "Allocation is the system of policies and guidelines which ensure that organs are distributed in an equitable, ethical and medically sound manner". (https://organdonor.gov/learn/glossary)

The UNOS Transplant Center lists the following who can be donors, living or dead, and when. Living donors can be parents, children, husbands, wives, friends, co-workers and even total strangers. Living donor candidates should be in good physical/mental health, at least 18 years old, willing to donate, well informed, have a solid grasp of risks, benefits, and potential outcomes, both good and bad, for both the donor and recipient, and have a good support system. Organs must be healthy. Organs that can be donated while donor is alive: one kidney, one lung, part of the liver, part of the pancreas, and part of the intestine. Organs that can be donated after death: kidneys (2), liver, lungs (2), heart, pancreas, intestines, hands, and face, including the corneas. Medical conditions that prevent one from being a living donor include: uncontrolled high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, HIV, hepatitis, or acute infections. Serious mental health conditions requiring treatment may prevent one from being a living donor.

Tissue Banks: what can be stored? Corneas, middle ear, skin, heart valves, bone, veins, cartilage, tendons, and ligaments. The American Association of Tissue Banks can help people understand tissue banks. The hospital, medical examiner, or funeral home notifies the local tissue bank. Doctors must take out the tissue within 24 hours after death. Tissue banks can store various tissues for a long time. Doctors use these to restore sight, cover burns, repair hearts, replace veins, and mend damaged connective tissue and cartilage. Tissues are difficult surgeries. They are called vascularized composite allograft (VCA) organ transplants.

Blood Stem Cells, Cord Blood, and Bone Marrow: a healthy person between 18 and 60 can donate blood stem cells. It is best when donor and receiving patient's tissue type match. The three sources of blood stem cells are bone marrow (tissue inside bones, produces many cells and doctors remove it to get to stem cells), cord blood stem cells (cord connecting newborn to mother during pregnancy produces many blood cells), and peripheral blood stem cells which can be stored in freezers for a long time. Platelets are tiny parts of cells that move around in the blood and help blood clot. They can be donated without donating blood. The donor replaces the missing platelets in a few hours.

Cornea is the clear part of the eye over the iris and pupil. Corneal donors do not have to "match" receiving patients like organ donors do. Donors are universal, meaning age, eye color, and the quality of eyesight don't matter. Doctors can remove and store corneas several hours after death and perform the corneal transplant three to five days after donation.

Source: :https://transplantliving.org/living-donation/being-a-living-donor/qualifications/#:~:text=Living%20donor%20candidates%20should%20be%3A%201%20In%20good,and%20recipient%205%20Have%20a%20good%20support%20system