

Media Guidelines for Reporting on Organ Donation

Organ and tissue donation makes a difference; it transforms the quality of life of transplant recipients and their families.

New Zealand media play an important role in shaping public perceptions, thoughts and feelings about donation. Therefore accurate reporting and use of appropriate language is vital in order to dispel common myths and misconceptions and encourage more conversation about donation.

It is important to remember that organ and tissue donors come from human tragedy and the generosity of families who, at a time of immense grief and distress, make the decision to donate their relative's organs and/or tissues. Please respect these families and whānau by using sensitive and appropriate language and imagery.

✓ Appropriate language

✗ Inappropriate language

Organ donation, the donation of organs and tissues, retrieval of organs, removal of organs

Organ harvest/ harvesting of organs – never use these terms! Harvest is an agricultural term and it is offensive to the organ donation and transplantation community, and donor families

Donor surgery or donation operation
If discussing the physical removal of organs, the term donor surgery is preferred.

Harvesting organs (see above)

Deceased donor
Deceased donation

Corpse, cadaver, cadaveric donation

Ventilator

Life support

Organs (heart, lungs, liver, kidney, pancreas)
Tissues (eye tissue (corneas and sclerae), heart valves, skin)

Body parts

Health professionals offer families the option of donation. The Human Tissue Act (2008) requires health professionals to obtain consent before organ and tissue donation may proceed.

Request organs, asking for organs, seeking consent to take organs

See **Glossary of frequently used terms in donation and transplantation** for more relevant terminology.



Also consider

- ✓ **Imagery**

Images of surgery or 'human organs for transplant' boxes can be confronting for donor families and whānau. Consider using personal photos or videos of transplant recipients or donor families, or alternatively donor family quotes or infographics about donation instead.
- ✓ **Credibility**

Organ Donation NZ (ODNZ) is the 24 hour service coordinating deceased organ and tissue donation. We can facilitate interviews with expert health professionals involved in donation and transplantation, or refer you to the appropriate person or organisation.

For accurate, up to date facts, figures and statistics on organ and tissue donation in New Zealand see the ODNZ Annual Report available on our website www.donor.co.nz or contact us directly.
- ✓ **Interviews**

Interviews with people who have real lived experience of being involved with a donation or of receiving a transplant need to be conducted with respect and compassion. Remember you are talking to the donor family about a deceased family member.

Respect the privacy of donor families whose family member has died and do not contact them for interviews. Please discuss with ODNZ before contacting a family.
- ✓ **Privacy**

Do not publish the date of death, donation or the exact transplant operation date. This is to respect the privacy of everyone involved - the donor family and the transplant recipients and their respective families and whānau. It is fine to refer in general terms, for example – "in 2018, late last year, a few months ago.

Some recipients, while incredibly grateful, do not want to know who their donor is and some donor families who have generously donated organs and tissues, do not want to know who the recipients are. It can be extremely distressing for them to read or see information about their donor/recipient in the media. Strict privacy agreements in Australia and New Zealand do not permit direct contact between donor families and recipients.
- ✓ **Language**

Use compassion and respect when discussing donation, appropriate language (see table above) and consider how past donor families might feel when they read or see your story.

People deal with death and grief differently and process the death of a family member in different ways. Appropriate language and terminology must be considered, along with different cultural perspectives. Transplant recipients can also experience a wide range of emotions at different stages in their transplant journeys.

Resources

For additional information about donation

- The organ and tissue donation process in New Zealand – what can you donate and what happens? <https://www.donor.co.nz/facts-and-myths/>
- Current organ donation statistics <https://www.donor.co.nz/facts-and-myths/statistics/>
- Common myths about organ donation <https://www.donor.co.nz/facts-and-myths/myths/>
- ODNZ Annual Reports <https://www.donor.co.nz/media-centre/>
- About Organ Donation New Zealand <https://www.donor.co.nz/about-odnz/>



How ODNZ can help

Many powerful stories exist within the New Zealand organ donation and transplantation community and we welcome your help in sharing these positive stories to encourage more people to talk about organ and tissue donation.

ODNZ is happy to discuss potential stories and provide more information on organ and tissue donation along with up to date statistics. While we are not able to discuss specific cases, we can facilitate interviews with donor family members, transplant recipients and health professionals involved in donation and transplantation.

Due to strict Australian and New Zealand confidentiality agreements, we are not permitted to facilitate direct contact between a recipient and donor family or vice versa.

For information about live liver and kidney donation/transplantation, or the New Zealand/Australia kidney exchange please contact Auckland DHB Communications communication@adhb.govt.nz

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