Original Article

Attitudes of Turkish Health Care Professionals toward Organ Donation and Factors Affecting Organ Donation: A Systematic Review

Hesna Gurler, RN, MS, PhD
Assistant Professor, Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing Department, Sivas, Turkey

Ayse Topal Hancer, RN, MS
Research Assistant, Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing Department, Sivas, Turkey

Correspondence: Hesna Gurler, RN, MS, PhD, Assistant Professor, Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing Department, Sivas, Turkey, E-mail: hesnagurler@hotmail.com

Abstract

Background: Determination of the attitudes and influencing factors of health care professionals toward organ donation is important to increase the organ donation rate

Aim: This study aimed to determine the attitudes of the Turkish health care professionals toward organ donation and factors affecting organ donation.

Method: A systematic review on the attitudes of the Turkish health care professionals toward organ donation and influencing factors was conducted. A search of all Turkish and English journals in CINAHL, Science Direct, Pubmed, Google Academic Search was conducted. Literature was scanned using keywords and 11 studies were included in the review according to the criteria. The quality of studies included was assessed using the CASP checklist. The checklist of Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA Checklist) was used to structure this review.

Results: Health care professionals had a positive attitude toward organ donation but the proportion of individuals who donated organs was very low. The rate of willingness to donate and donor card was significantly higher among doctors than nurses and other health care professionals. The main reasons for participants who had not volunteered to donate organs were religious reasons, concern about disfigurement of the body, lack of adequate information regarding organ transplantation.

Conclusion: This review showed that health care professionals should be informed about organ donation, religious dimension and legal regulations.

Keywords: attitude, health care professionals, organ donation, Turkey

Background

Organ transplantation is a treatment that offers a better quality of life and saves life (Balajee, Ramachandran, & Subitha, 2017). However, individuals with organ failure can’t receive healthy organ in time to save their lives (Buthelezi & Ross, 2011). Although the countries have made various attempts to increase the organ donation rate, the organ donation rate is not at a desired level globally and the gap between supply and demand for organ donation widens daily (Balajee, Ramachandran, & Subitha, 2017; Erdogan et al., 2002; Kafkia et al., 2006; Esezobor, Disu, & Oseni, 2012; Oluyombo et al., 2016; Vijayalakshmi, Sunitha, Gandhi, Thimmaiah, & Math, 2016).

According to the Turkey 2018 data of Ministry of Health, there were 26,263 patients who were waiting organ transplant while the number of those who were organ-transplanted was 1,964 (https://organ.saglik.gov.tr).

According to 2017 data on international organ donation and transplantation, Turkey ranks on the bottom lines (7 donors) in terms of the annual number of deceased donors per million but is placed on the top (47.5 donors) in terms of the number of living donors (IRODAT, 2018).
Studies in Turkey suggested that religious perceptions, lack of knowledge and personal value judgments affect the views and decisions of public toward organ donation (Efil, Sişe, Uzel, & Eser, 2013; Gungormus & Dayapoglu, 2015; Yazar, & Acikgoz, 2016). The view of the public toward organ donation can be also influenced by the attitude of health care professionals (HCPs) toward this issue (Leon, Einav, & Varon, 2015).

Health care professionals play a key role in identifying potential donors, guiding attitudes and behaviours, obtaining consent and raising public awareness about the organ donation, therefore, they are undeniably crucial in the success of organ transplantation. (Oluyombo et. al. 2016; Jawoniyi, Gormley, McGleenan, & Noble, 2018; Lomero, Jiménez, Herrera, Rasero, & Sandiunenge, 2017; Zambudio, Martínez-Alarcón, Parrilla, & Ramírez, 2009).

They inform public about organ donation process, religious and legal dimension of organ donation (Akgun, Bilgin, Tokalak, Kut, & Haberal, 2003; Araujo & Siqueira, 2016). Information offered by health care personnel has an important influence on the general public’s decision about health problems (Topbas, Can, Can, & Ozgun, 2005, Zambudio, Martínez-Alarcón, Parrilla, & Ramírez, 2009).

They can also affect public opinion with their attitudes and behaviors; the generation of a negative attitude in the public by HCPs is very difficult to reverse (Topbas et al., 2005, Zambudio et al., 2009). Therefore, their attitude is crucial to the participation of public in organ donation. But studies showed that health professionals' contribution to organ donation is insufficient (Demir et al., 2011; Leon, et al., 2015; Topbas et al., 2011). In this context, determination of attitudes of HCPs toward organ donation and influencing factors are fundamental to increase donation rates.

This review aimed to determine the attitudes of the Turkish HCPs toward organ donation and factors affecting organ donation.

**Methods**

We conducted a systematic review of the published literature about attitudes of HCPs in Turkey toward organ donation and factors affecting organ donation in October in 2017.

Qualitative studies that explored the issue on Turkish HCPs were analyzed. The following key words were used for the search: "organ donation", "attitude", "Turkey" “health care professionals” as Turkish and English in CINAHL (n=1166), Science Direct (n=758), Pubmed (n=22), Google Academic Search (n=460) databases and 11 studies were included in the study according to the criteria.

The primary inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) original research article carried out in Turkey, (2) published in the English or Turkish language,(3) included attitudes of HCPs toward organ donation. Articles that did not attempt to measure attitudes of HCPs toward organ donation and the population was not HCPs were excluded from the review.

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The checklist of Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA Checklist) was used to structure this review (See Supplementary File 1). The initial electronic database search produced 2406 citations. Titles and abstracts were screened manually by one author according to inclusion criteria, of these 512 were duplicates, 1493 were related to organ transplant process, ethical dimensions, brain death, patients’ and their caregivers’ experiences etc. and 362 did not carry out in Turkey. 39 papers were read full and 28 were excluded because the population was not HCP (n=24) and group differences were not assessed (n=4). A total of 11 papers were thus selected for analysis. A flow diagram summarizing the process of incorporating studies into the study is presented in Figure 1.

The two authors independently screened the titles for inclusion and exclusion criteria. They reviewed each article and met to discuss results until consensus on article eligibility was reached. For the present review, all included papers were assessed for quality using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). CASP qualitative research checklist included 10 questions. Qualitative papers may achieve a total score of 10 points. Authors read each paper and discussed the scores assigned to each paper. The results of CASP scores can be found in Table 1.
Results

General characteristics of selected studies

Eleven articles were included in final review. Table 1 presents the summary of included studies. All of the studies were descriptive and cross sectional survey. The studies included physicians, nurses, other health personels such as midwives, laboratuary technicians, X-ray and anesthesia technicians, other hospital workers including cleaning staffs and patient sitters, medical students and nurse teachers.

While five studies (Akgun et al. 2003; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Erdogan et al. 2002; Ozdag & Bal, 2001; Topbas et al. 2005) were published before 2010, six studies were published after 2010 (Aytas, Kartalcı, & Unal, 2011; Balci & Sahingoz, 2014; Cillimoglu, Yılmaz, & Ogurlu, 2016; Demir et al., 2011; Efil et al., 2013; Topbas et al. 2011). The studies were mainly in English (Akgun et al. 2003; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Demir et al., 2011; Erdogan et al. 2002; Ozdag & Bal, 2001; Topbas et al. 2005; Topbas et al. 2011;), there were also Turkish studies (Aytas et al., 2011; Balci & Sahingoz, 2014; Cillimoglu, Yılmaz, & Ogurlu, 2016; Efil et al., 2013).

Rate of willing to donate organs

The rate of willingness to organ donation was not at the desired level in the studies examined, ranging from 32.9% (Topbas et al., 2005) to 93.3% (Erdogan et al. 2002). In a study there is no information about rate of willingness (Topbas et al. 2011). Rate of willing to donate organs was significantly higher among the physicians than nurses and other HCPs in studies comparing the groups (p<0.05) (Akgun et al. 2003; Bilgin & Akgun,
Rate of having an organ donation card

Majority of HCPs had positive attitudes about organ donation, but rate of having a signed organ donation card was very low, ranging from 1.9% (Balcı & Sahingoz 2014) to 40% (Demir et al., 2011). In two studies, there was no information about the rate of organ donation card (Aytas et al., 2011; Ozdag & Bal 2001). The rate of having an organ donation card was significantly higher among the physicians than nonphysician health personnels (Akgun et al. 2003; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Demir et al., 2011; Topbas, Can, Can, & Ozgun, 2005; Topbas et al. 2011) (p<0.05).

The main reasons opposing organ donation

The main reasons opposing the organ donation were religious and traditional reasons (Akgun et al., 2003; Aytas et al., 2011; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Erdogan et al. 2002; Topbas et al., 2005; Topbas et al. 2011), concern about disfigurement of the body (Akgun et al. 2003; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Efîl et al., 2013; Ozdag & Bal, 2001), lack of adequate information regarding organ transplantation and brain death (Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Topbas et al., 2005; Topbas et al. 2011), fear of inappropriate use of organs/tissues (Akgun et al. 2003; Aytas et al., 2011; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Demir et al., 2011; Efîl et al., 2013; Ozdag & Bal, 2001), premature withdrawal of life support (Bilgin & Akgun, 2002), lack of interest in the subject (Topbas et al. 2011), not certain about the success of transplantation (Ozdag & Bal, 2001). In a study there was no information about reasons for not having an organ donation (Balci & Sahingoz, 2014).

Discussion

This study reviewed Turkish HCPs’ attitudes toward organ donation and factors affecting organ donation and demonstrated that majority of HCPs in Turkey had favorable attitudes, but only a small proportion had signed organ donation card. The low rates of organ donation card show that health professionals’ contribution to organ donation is not enough. These rates in our literature review were lower than the rates in other countries. For example, in Saudi Arabia, in a study by Flayou et al. (2016), 82.8% of HCPs expressed their agreement to donation after their death. In a study by Alsaied et al. (2012) 64.3% of physicians and 32.5% of nurses in Qatar had organ donation card.

Consistent with findings in other countries (Esezobor et al., 2012; Leon et al., 2015; Lomero et al. 2015), our literature review indicates that Turkish physicians have the most favorable attitudes toward organ donation of all hospital personnels (Akgun et al. 2003; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Topbas et al., 2005). However, nurses are fundamental in the organ donation and transplantation process (Zambudio et al., 2009). As a result of their proximity to patients and their relatives, nurses are seen as a key element raising public awareness about donation and their attitudes play a vital role in improving attitudes of public (Lomero et al. 2017). Positive behavior of nurses such as donation of own organs can set an example for public (Aytas et al., 2011; Gungormus & Dayapoglu, 2015; Zambudio et al., 2009).

Nurses are an important link with the community, and as HS, can help to raise public awareness and establish trust among the general public toward responsible, ethical, professional organ and tissue donation and transplantation, to engage medical community, and to encourage public debate and provide information so that people can decide on donation and make their wishes known to their families.

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Understanding refusal reasons could help to increase the rate of organ donation (Flayou et al. 2016). Religious and traditional reasons (Akgun et al. 2003; Aytas et al., 2011; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Erdogan et al. 2002; Topbas et al., 2005; Topbas et al. 2011), the concern about disfigurement of the body (Akgun et al. 2003; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Efıl et al., 2013; Ozdag & Bal, 2001), Lack of adequate information regarding organ transplantation and brain death (Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Topbas et al., 2005; Topbas et al. 2011), the fear of inappropriate use of organs/tissues (Akgun et al. 2003; Aytas et al., 2011; Bilgin & Akgun, 2002; Demir et al., 2011; Efıl et al., 2013; Erdogan et al. 2002; Topbas et al., 2005) not trusting the medical team (Aytas et al. 2011; Cillimoglu et al., 2016; Demir et al., 2011; Efıl et al., 2013; Erdogan et al. 2002) were the factors reported by HCPs opposing the organ donation. These obstacles show that HCPs have insufficient knowledge about religious dimension of organ donation and organ transplantation process and need education about these issues. Turkey is a developing Muslim country of more than 80 million people. In Turkey, religion has an important role in decision making in social life. The Turkish Department of Religious Affairs stated that organ donation is compatible with Islam (Religious Affairs Directorate of Turkey). When HCPs know that their religion permits organ donation, their attitudes toward organ donation become more favorable (Demir et al., 2011). Medical staffs are the first to establish contacts with potential donors and if they are not well-informed, they could misinform the public (Oluymobo et al. 2016). To increase and promote organ donation and attitude of health care professionals, they should be educated about ethical, moral, and religious dimensions of organ donation and transplantation and their misbeliefs should be eliminated. Such education could be incorporated into mandatory training and completed by all health care professionals.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this qualitative review. First, this review only included journal articles published in English. Studies published in other languages and other kinds of sources, such as doctoral dissertations, that also explore CM with patients were excluded. Also, we searched with four electronic bibliographic databases to retrieved relevant studies and followed the PRISMA guidelines on searching; however, there could be missing studies. There are several limitations to this qualitative review. First, this review only included journal articles published in English. Studies published in other languages and other kinds of sources, such as doctoral dissertations, that also explore CM with patients were excluded. Also, we searched with four electronic bibliographic databases to retrieved relevant studies and followed the PRISMA guidelines on searching; however, there could be missing studies. There are some limitations to this qualitative review. First, this review did not determine health care professionals’ knowledge level about organ transplantation as a possible obstacle because majority of studies didn’t evaluate knowledge level. Second, this review only included journal articles and other kinds of sources such as doctoral thesis were excluded. Also, we search with four electronic
databases to retrieved relevant studies; however there could be missing studies.

Conclusion

This is the first qualitative systematic review of the perceptions and experiences that individuals with chronic illnesses and their caregivers have about. This is the first qualitative systematic review of attitudes of Turkish HCPs toward organ donation and influencing factors. In conclusion, HCPs seem to generally look warmly on organ donation while it was not reflected in their behavior. Despite the HCPs display positive attitude toward donation, positive attitude is not always sufficient. It is absolutely a necessary priority to inform HCPs with nationwide media and educational campaigns about organ donation and transplantation process, because their attitude has strong impact on public and negative attitude is linked to lack of knowledge. We believe that one of the important ways to increase willingness about donation and donation rates in Turkish HCPs is to educate university students in health sciences about ethical, moral, and religious issues related to organ donation and transplantation.

Relevance to clinical practice

Health care professionals are fundemental in generating public awareness. They are key agents to increase organ donation rate. Therefore, there is a need of focused education in curricula on ethical, moral, and religious dimensions of organ donation and transplantation for undergraduate medical and nursing students in Turkey. In-service trainings can be also increased to increase the awareness of health workers about organ donation. This may help create a favorable opinion toward donation in future HCPs and reinforce personal beliefs. Health care organizations should evaluate opinions of all HCPs about organ donation and possible obstacles regularly and inform them about organ donation and organise organ donation campaigns.

References


Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) *Making sense of evidence*. Available at: https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/, (accessed 2 February,2018.)


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<td>Akgun et al. 2003</td>
<td>485 doctors 699 nurses</td>
<td>Only 55.1% of the physicians and 37.5% of the nurses were willing to donate their own organs</td>
<td>Only 27.1% of the physicians and 11.5% of the nurses had already donated</td>
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<td>Aytas et al. 2011</td>
<td>201 nurses</td>
<td>Only 46.0% of participants were willing to donate own organs</td>
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<td>Balcı &amp; Sahingoğuz 2014</td>
<td>641 nurses</td>
<td>Only 88.8% were willing to donate own organs</td>
<td>Only 1.9% had organ donation card</td>
<td>There no information about Reasons for not having an organ donation</td>
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<td>Bilgin &amp; Akgun 2002</td>
<td>1184 physicians and nurses</td>
<td>Only 55.0% of physicians and 37% of nurses were willing to donate own organs</td>
<td>Only 27% of doctors and 11% of nurses had organ donation card.</td>
<td>Concern about inappropriate use of organs, Premature withdrawal of life support</td>
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<td>Cillimoglu et al. 2016</td>
<td>415 hospital workers (256 nurses, 56 doctors, cleaning staff, patient sitter) 320 students</td>
<td>Only 58.9% of the physicians and 43.4% of the nurses were willing to donate their own organs,</td>
<td>Only 16.1 % of doctors and 9% nurses had organ donation card</td>
<td>Not trusting the medical team, No enough information about organ donation, Religious and traditional reasons, Concern about disfigurement of the body</td>
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<td>Demir et al. 2011</td>
<td>249 nurses 60 doctors</td>
<td>Only 90% of health care professionals were to donate their own organs</td>
<td>Only 18% of nurses and 40% of doctors had organ donation card.</td>
<td>Lack of confidence, Fear of procurement, Inappropriate use of harvested organs</td>
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<td>Efil et al. 2013</td>
<td>150 health care professionals, 156 outpatients</td>
<td>Only 43.3% of health care professionals were to donate their own</td>
<td>Only 3.3% of health care professionals had organ donation card.</td>
<td>Concern about disfigurement of the body, Inappropriate use of harvested organs, Not trusting the medical team</td>
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<td>Erdogan et al. 2002</td>
<td>116 interns, 95 general practitioners, 97 specialist</td>
<td>Only 93.3% of physicians were to donate their own organs</td>
<td>Only 23.1% had organ donation card, Inappropriate use of harvested organs, Religious beliefs, Not trusting the medical team</td>
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<td>Ozdag &amp; Bal 2001</td>
<td>308 nurses, 18 health technicians, 32 midwife, 8 nurse teachers</td>
<td>Only 68.8% of professionals were to donate their own organs</td>
<td>There was no information about organ donation card, Fear of mutilation of body, Not certain about the success of transplantation</td>
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<td>Topbas et al. 2005</td>
<td>148 assistants, 171 nurses, 134 interns</td>
<td>Only 50.2% of assistants and 32.9% of nurses were willing to donate their own organs</td>
<td>Only 3.4% of assistant and 2.3% of nurses had organ donation card, Lack of information about the donation process, Concerns about the sale of organs, Islamic religious beliefs</td>
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<td>Topbas et al. 2011</td>
<td>141 doctors, 588 nonphysician health care professionals</td>
<td>Only 59.8% of all participants were willing to donate their own organs</td>
<td>Only 12.1% of doctors and 6.5% of nonphysician health personels had organ donation card, Lack of interest in the subject, Lack of knowledge about donation and procedure, Islamic religious beliefs and/or traditions</td>
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