Needs For a Paediatric Organ and Tissue Donation Protocol; an Overview of the Literature

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Background: Paediatric donation is a unique and extremely sensitive process that requires specific knowledge and competencies. Most countries make use of a specific donation protocols for organ and tissue donation to ensure optimal care for the donor and the family during and after the donation process. These protocols, however, focus mainly on adults. The donation process for children differs from that of adults in many ways. We performed a literature review to identify and compare donation protocols for the paediatric population.

Methods: We searched PubMed, Web of Science, Embase electronic databases. Our search strategy consisted of terms describing organ and tissue donation protocols, specific to children and neonates. After title and abstract screening, we performed full-text screening on relevant data such as protocol, policy description or recommendations for a protocol.

Results: A total of 13 articles were included in this literature review. Most articles originated North America and only a few were from Europe. Most of the articles discussed Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) protocols. Other articles discussed both DCD and Donation after Brain Death (DBD) and one article focused solely on DBD. The recurring themes in these articles included identification of potential donors, approach of parents and family, palliative care and collaboration with the Organ Procurement Organization (OPO). Seven of the 13 articles (54%) call for standardisation of paediatric donation policies.

Conclusion: Publications on paediatric donation protocols are very scarce. Despite the call for standardisation of paediatric donation policies by international experts, no comprehensive and national paediatric donation protocol was found. We identified several recurring themes in the literature that can be used for the development of such a protocol.