

Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Donation rate up, but long road ahead: Nadda

TNN | Aug 12, 2016, 06.21 AM IST



In an interview to TOI, Union health minister J P Nadda lists the steps his ministry is taking towards building the infrastructure required to make organ donation, retrieval and transplantation an integrated transparent process

How does the government plan to minimise the gap between demand and supply of organs?

Organs are a national resource; we cannot afford to waste even one. The government is aware of the problem and measures are being taken to bridge the gap. Many more are required. The government is working on a two pronged strategy . First is prevention of diseases that lead to organ

failure thereby reducing the demand for organs. Steps have been taken to identify causes that lead to organ failure and take remedial measures. Kidney failure accounts for the highest number of organ failure cases as a result of diabetes and high blood pressure.

The second part is enhancing awareness to encourage organ donation and strengthening the infrastructure for organ transplant through the national programme for prevention and control of non-communicable disease (NCD) and national organ transplant programme (NOTP). Under NOTP , focus is on promoting organ donation from the deceased. Efforts are on to prevent incidence through emphasis on healthy life style, encouraging physical activities and Yoga under the Swachh Bharat Swasth Bharat campaign.

That said, around 1.5 lakh people die in road accidents annually in India. Majority are healthy and young. They are ideal potential

donors. While our first priority is to save lives of such trauma victims, in cases of death, their organs can be donated. We plan to integrate trauma care with the organ donation programme.

How do you plan to institutionalise organ donation?

Bridging the gap between demand and supply requires a consistent calibrated institutional machinery . Efforts are being made to substantially increase the number of hospitals involved in processes of organ retrieval and transplantation. Every hospital with ICU facility and a competent team of doctors is a potential retrieval centre and is to be linked with hospitals having transplantation facility .

Apex organisation National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) has been set up at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, to coordinate activities, and is responsible for awareness and capacity building for donation and transplantation. It will also establish an online network between organ retrieval, transplant centres and tissue banks across the country and maintain a digital national registry of donors and transplants. A website, <http://www.notto.nic.in>, has been launched for this. Online and offline pledging facility for organ/tissue donation is also available. A 24x7 toll free helpline is 1800114770.

Five regional organisations are being set up in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Assam, Bengal and Chandigarh. Similar organisations are proposed at the state level. Every hospital undertaking transplant, retrieval or banking is given a unique ID by NOTTO when they register. Recognising the need to ensure availability of trained supporting manpower, the government is encouraging specialised courses in dialysis medicine and transplant coordination. Every hospital that starts retrieval and transplantation can employ two transplant coordinators at the government's expense.

Organ donation is not just a health ministry programme but is an endeavour that requires cooperation from departments across the Centre, states, law enforcement authorities, NGOs and citizens. An inter-ministerial committee headed by the health secretary to coordinate nationwide activities to promote organ donation held its first meeting this February.

Are there any campaigns on this issue, perhaps similar to anti-tobacco awareness initiative or the immunisation drive?

Donation and optimal utilisation of organs is critical; so awareness is high on the government's priority . PM Narendra Modi

highlighted the importance of organ donation in his Mann Ki Baat broadcasts in October and November 2015. That gave a tremendous impetus. In India, organ donation day is celebrated since 2010; the sixth anniversary was on last November 27 when NOTTR was launched. Plus, a publicity drive is on through every medium available and talks by experts.

How can the process of cadaver donation be made hassle-free?

Online networking, registry, a dedicated 24x7 call centre and involvement of ministries concerned, states, and NGOs can go a long way in addressing coordination problems. At the institutional level, there is a provision for dedicated transplant coordinators at retrieval and transplant centres and also at trauma centres. Of late, we have seen some praiseworthy efforts to facilitate timely transport of donated organs and successful transplantation that displayed the highest level of coordination. I thank all agencies concerned and trust such efforts will blossom into a national movement. The media highlighted the noble acts that will sensitise society about the importance of organ donation and saving lives.

Any plans to incentivise donors to encourage organ donations?

Organ donation is a noble act; government appreciates the gestures. This is, however, a sensitive issue and needs wider consultation, debate.

Illegal kidney trade continues even in leading hospitals

When a person faces end-stage organ failure and there are no donors, many resort to illegal activities. The mechanism is already in place to monitor illegal transplant activities in the states. Surveillance has been strengthened which has resulted in better reporting and remedial action too. Our law is one of the world's strictest. Penalties for organ trading include jail up to 10 years and fine of up to Rs 1 crore. With increased organ donations, such illegal activities will come down. The donation rate has increased in the last two years but there is a long way to go.