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TOI campaign: Time to sign up for organ donation

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consultant, urologist and transplant surgeon, and managing trustee of Mohan Foundation, an NGO that promotes organ donation. About 95% of transplants are taking place in the private sector; large swathes of the country have no donations and no transplants.

This is because these areas have no hospital to support the programme even after more awareness ensures more donors, said Dr Shroff. By seeing to it that every medical college has its own transplant centre and every district hospital be equipped to harvest organs, it can be ensured that willing donors are not turned away for lack of facilities to make the organ donation a reality, suggest doctors.

A long-standing demand of the sector for a national registry was fulfilled when the health ministry launched a national organ donation registry called National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), headquartered in Safdarjung Hospital in

NEW DELHI: Increasing levels of awareness have ensured that the number of people coming forward to donate their organs after death has gone up three times in the last three years, from 190 in 2012 to 570 in 2015. It is an incredibly small number considering the lakhs of people waiting for an organ donation but several surveys indicate a growing awareness and willingness among people to donate organs.

"The infrastructure to harvest organs+ and to carry out transplants has to keep pace with the growing willingness. Without this, we may end up with a situation where people are coming forward to donate but hospitals are not equipped to harvest organs," points out Dr Sunil Shroff, senior

Delhi. The idea of a central database is to track, facilitate and promote organ donations across the country . However the NOTTO is yet to get its act together, having started in November last year.

"Against a requirement of 1 to 2 lakh kidneys, only about 5,000 transplantations are being done + annually . Similarly, against a requirement of 30,000 liver transplantation requirements, we are currently doing about 1,000 only. The main reason for this is very less number of organ donations from among the deceased," said health minister JP Nadda.

He also touched upon the inequity in access to trans plant facilities, pointing out that all transplant facilities are available in metropolitan cities and 95% exist in private sector. There is a need to increase transplant facilities in other parts too. As a first step towards rectifying this, the minister has promised transplant facilities will be opened in all major government hospitals.

In the midst of these positive developments, kidney rackets surfaced + in various cities, highlighting the need for greater vigilance and stringent implementation of safety norms for live donations. The scandals also reiterated the need for a strong cadaveric donor programme, to help meet the urgent demand.

Along with a registry for donations, volunteers who work on campaigns for organ donation have been calling for a centralised registry for recipients with strict rules dictating how transplant surgeons and coordinators determine who should be placed on the waiting list for organs. They pointed out that a fully transparent system would boost the confidence of donors that their organs were being used in a fair and equitable manner.

Now in its fourth year, TOI's Organ Donation Day campaign + aims to further increase awareness about organ donation, help dispel myths and explore issues that deter organ donation. The campaign, whose earlier chapters motivated thousands to sign up as donors in a matter of weeks, also aims to engage with relevant authorities to prioritise the setting up of infrastructure to ensure organ donation is a fair practice, and the process smooth enough so donated organs do not go waste.