

# POLICY FORUM

## *Organ Donation and Transplantation*

### Introduction

*Gordon H. DeFriese, PhD*

### Issue Brief:

The Donation of Human Organs and the Evolving Capacity for Transplantation: Exciting Developments and Future Prospects

*Erika L. Rager, MD, MPH*

*“The current donor system depends on a patchwork of organ donor cards, driver’s licenses, advanced directives, and durable power of attorney for healthcare statements as vehicles for citizens to state their wishes.”*

### COMMENTARIES

Increasing Donation: Key Factors to Save More Lives

*Lloyd Jordan*

The Gift Relationship in Process: From the Donor to the Recipient

*Julie Landon, RN, CPTC*

The Rapid Development of Solid Organ Transplantation in North Carolina

*Michael R. Mill, MD*

Building a Modern Transplant Center

*J. Elizabeth Tuttle-Newhall, MD*

Some of the Challenges of Organ Donation Among Minority Populations

*Lynt B. Johnson, MD, FACS*

A Minority Perspective: The State of Minority Donation in North Carolina

*Debbie Mann Gibbs*

“What’s in Your Wallet?” Will Your Intentions Be Known?

*Betsy J. Walsh, JD, MPH, and Judy Jones Tisdale, PhD*

### SPECIAL ARTICLE

Giving and Receiving when Vital Organs Fail

*Donald L. Madison, MD  
(with Andrew, Susan, and James Pike)*



# INTRODUCTION

## **Policy Forum:** *Organ Donation and Transplantation*

Almost every week, we hear stories from North Carolina and elsewhere in the nation about an individual who is desperately waiting for word that a bodily organ is available to replace one that is seriously diseased or malfunctioning. Life is both literally and figuratively “in the balance” as the waiting game goes on, sometimes for months or years. Why is it that so few people, particularly so few from minority population groups, are willing to take the necessary steps before the time of their own death to assure both healthcare providers and their families of their intention to donate organs that might save or improve the lives of others? Why are we burying so many of these vital organs day-after-day, rather than extending the lives of those in need? Why is it so difficult to find live donors of organs that might offer the same life-saving benefits, without compromising the health of the donor? These are important questions of health policy significance, as well as tremendously important personal issues for those whose lives have been touched by the events and circumstances which have made either organ donation or receipt major issues of concern.

The other dimension that captured the interest and concern of our editors is that the science and skills of transplantation are now such that most recipients of donated organs have the prospect of living full and functional lives without overwhelming concerns they once would have had with rejection and the need for further transplantation. The rapid diffusion of transplantation technologies and skills and the development of multi-organ transplantation services within our state’s largest hospitals, has given all North Carolinians access to some of the world’s most advanced medical care for conditions where only transplantation offers hope.

In this issue of the *Journal* we are pleased to offer a set of articles providing a broad overview of many of these concerns in the hope that more attention will be given to this important aspect of contemporary medical care for those who could benefit from an expansion of both our donor networks and participation, as well as from the advancing science of transplantation. Erika Rager, MD, MPH, a surgical resident at UNC-Chapel Hill who is currently taking a two-year residency in preventive medicine, offers a comprehensive issue brief on the topic. We are pleased that leading figures from the transplant services of both Duke Medical Center and UNC-Chapel Hill have agreed to participate in this special issue forum. In addition we are pleased to include contributions from our two donor organizations in the state, Carolina Donor Services and LifeShare Of The Carolinas. Because of our concern over the rather low rate of participation of minority populations in organ donation and transplantation, we have invited Dr. Lynt Johnson of Georgetown University, an African American transplant surgeon, and Debbie Mann Gibbs of LifeShare Of The Carolinas to help address these issues. Finally, Contributing Editor Donald Madison, MD, offers an interesting interview with a North Carolina family who has experienced a broad spectrum of these issue first-hand.

For those who may not have previously signed (and had witnessed) a donor card, one is provided in this issue of the *Journal*, which may be clipped and placed in one’s wallet along with a driver’s license.

As always, we invite the comments and reactions of our readers to these and other topical issues covered in these pages.

—Gordon H. DeFries, PhD  
*Editor-in-Chief and Publisher*