

Govt promises transparency in organ donation

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Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union health minister, has called for total, Information Technology-guided transparency in the interface between the organ donor and recipient when the National Organ and Tissue Transplantation Organization (NOTTO) becomes operational.

After a visit to the Safdarjung Hospital, where NOTTO is housed on two floors of the Pathology Building, the minister said, "There will be no VIP quotas and no recommendations from officers will be entertained. Every life is worth protecting and the spirit of the movement is not to be mocked."

A general waiting list will be maintained. Once a brain-stem dead patient's consent is available, a state-of-the-art retrieval, matching and transplantation operation will swing into action. A patient who registered his name for the waiting list will be given a number which will not change even if he admits himself to another hospital later.

NOTTO's web portal will be fully operational, and in the first phase will cover kidney cases within the next 10 days. The second phase is expected to cover some more body parts and will be operationalized in six months.

The Rs 149 crore National Organ and Tissue Transplantation Program will have NOTTO at its apex. There would also be Regional Organ and Tissue Transplantation Organizations at Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh, and Guwahati. Six state level organizations are also planned at the new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences at Patna, Jodhpur, Rishikesh, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, and Bhopal.

"I am an organ donor myself and am committed to making this a nation-wide movement.. Why can't we be like Spain where every brain-stem death case leads, by default, to the body being donated for saving lives? I think we should educate our people more on this necessity," the minister said.

As a consequence, the health minister has ordered ministry officials to plan a series of programs involving students and social organizations. Essay writing competitions and social events are being planned to raise awareness.

Dr Harsh Vardhan spent a long time inspecting NOTTO's networking office, training center and the facilities for preserving skin, cornea, bones, and heart valves at the National Bio Material Center which is a part of the organization. A call center is being set up, which will be the point of contact between donors and people on the waiting list in real time.

Incidentally, the minister had launched the Asian Organ Donor Registry at AIIMS, New Delhi on the occasion of World Organ Donation day (August 6) and on August 26 had released a poster for awareness generation organized by the Indian Medical Association.