

AIIMS to start skin bank facility

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In a major step towards availability of skin for reconstruction surgeries, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) will soon start North India's first government-run skin bank facility.

The Institute accounts the demand for skin for reconstruction surgeries related to congenital, trauma, cancer and burn injuries as high as 150 per cent. With this skin bank, the institute will store skin received through cadaver donations which will be available for the surgeries. However, taking note of the gap between demand and supply of skin donation the Institute is working with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi to develop "artificial skin".

The Institute has sought regulatory clearances from the Delhi government and is in process of procuring medical equipment for the bank. To be launched in close coordination with the institute's bone bank facility, the skin bank is expected to start in the early months of 2018.

Like other organ donation, experts harvest skin within six hours of death, usually from the legs, thighs and back, with only the uppermost layer of skin harvested in the process. Once the skin is harvested, the doctors are planning to use glycerol to preserve it. Due to its anti-bacterial properties, glycerol will keep the donated skin free of infection. With the planned technology, the donated skin can be preserved for a period of 4-5 years.