



Attitudes of Members of the Baptist Church Toward Organ Transplantation

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The Baptist Church in Poland has not presented its official stance on organ, tissue, or cell transplantation so far. The aim of the work was to find out Baptists' knowledge and opinions concerning organ transplantation.

Methods. The respondents were 296 members of the Baptist Church. The research tool used in the study was an original survey questionnaire.

Results. The vast majority of Baptists (72%) would agree to have organs removed from a deceased family member. The fact of knowing someone who has had an organ transplanted was a factor promoting such a decision. Three fourths of the respondents would agree on removal of their organs for transplantation after death, but only 47% have talked about that with their families. Of the respondents, 37% think that the transplant recipient should have the opportunity to meet the family of the donor. The respondents who did not agree to have organs removed from a deceased person most often mentioned such reasons as aversion to violating bodily integrity of the deceased person (55%), religious beliefs (54%), failure to agree with the death of the deceased person (46%), not knowing the deceased person's will (34%), and lack of trust in health service (32%).

Conclusion. Propagation of knowledge of transplantation is the only effective method of increasing the number of organ transplantations, because many ethical, social, and religious barriers in the society result from insufficient education.

THE RAPID development of transplantology has allowed for transplanting organs all over the world, but at the same time has brought many new challenges and problems [1]. Problems related to removing and transplanting tissues and organs exist on many planes: Medical, legal, psychological, and ethical. Different approaches to the issue of transplantation in the world often result from cultural differences, and are to a great extent affected by religions predominating in certain regions or countries [2]. Religion is a very important element of nonmaterial culture; it allows many people to find their place in the world and obtain the answers to questions concerning the meaning of human existence. Whether it is Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, or other belief system, religion is an inseparable part of human experience, the source of guidelines and principles for behavior and thinking in many areas of life, including health conditions [3]. That is why religion is not unimportant in the formation of social attitudes toward transplantation [4]. Although none of the world's biggest religions forbids

donating organs or having them transplanted, ethical problems connected with it are perceived and interpreted in various ways. When an extremely difficult decision must be made, the donors' families often refer to the authorities they recognize, and their religious community can be such an authority. One of the communities is the Baptist Church. The Baptist Church has about 47 million adult members; including whole families, the Baptist community numbers in the hundreds of millions. Baptists are Protestant Christians who emphasize individual relationships with God and the overriding role of the Holy Scriptures. According to Baptists, salvation is not attainable on the basis of one's deeds, but is God's mercy through personal faith in the redemption from sin by Jesus Christ's ransom [5]. They base their lifestyle and

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principles on the Old and New Testament. For Baptists, faith is a matter of conscious choice, so they claim nobody should be forced to accept a religious identity [6,7]. The Baptist Church in Poland has not presented its official stance toward organ, tissue, or cell transplantation to date. Baptists think that donating organs and tissues for transplantation after death is a matter of conscience, but they approve of it as an act of compassion and union with all who suffer and need help. In 1988 in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution in which doctors were encouraged to discuss with patients the issue of donating organs should the need arise. Concerns connected with transplantation do not result from religious beliefs, but from lack of trust in the health care service, not knowing relatives' will concerning the donation of organs, and from failure to accept the fact that the beloved person has died. However, despite those real concerns, in Baptist Churches believers are encouraged to support donation, exhorted to trust health care services, and informed that transplantation is not contrary to their religion. Baptists usually agree with the medical diagnoses of brain death [8]. The aim of this work was to find out Baptists' level of knowledge concerning organ transplantation and to learn their attitudes and opinions regarding organ transplantation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out using a diagnostic poll. The respondents were 296 members of the Baptist Church. Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary. All respondents gave their consent to participation in the study. The study was approved of by the local bioethics committee. The study tool was a survey questionnaire including 22 questions pertaining to transplantation. Pearson's χ^2 test was used to analyze the categorical data. Normality of numerical data distribution was verified with Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. The 2 groups were compared with the Mann-Whitney nonparametric test. $P < .05$ was regarded as significant. The statistical analysis was carried out with the use of Statistica 10.0 package from Statsoft (Tulsa OK).

RESULTS

The group comprised 53% women and 47% men. The respondents' mean age was 37.7 ± 18.5 years (range, 18–90). Nearly all of them (98%), regardless of age or gender, were aware of what organ transplantation was. One half of the respondents (51%) had talked about transplantation with their relatives and friends. Women significantly more often initiated discussions on the subject of transplantation than men did (54% vs 42%; $P = .032$).

Approval of Transplantation of Organs Taken From Dead Donors

The vast majority (87.5%) of members of the Baptist Church approved of transplantation of organs from dead donors. Those who accepted organ transplantation were significantly younger compared with those who opposed it

(37.3 vs 49.8 years; $P = .049$). The mean age of those who were undecided was 28.9 years.

Consent to Have Organs Taken From a Deceased Family Member

Approximately three quarters of the respondents (72.29%) would give consent to removing organs from a deceased family member; every fifth person was undecided and 7% were against it. Those who did not agree were older compared with those who gave consent (42.1 vs 37.3 years old). The mean age of those who were undecided was 31.6 years. People who knew someone who had received an allograft more often expressed their consent to the removal of organs ($P = .036$). Among the respondents who "did not know any recipient," the answer "I have no opinion" was given more often (24%) than among those who "knew a recipient" (14%).

Consent to Having One's Own Organs Removed for Transplantation After Death

Of the respondents, 75% expressed consent to having their organs removed for transplantation after death; the number was higher among women (81%) than men (69%). Compared with women, men were much more often undecided (27% vs 11%). Among respondents, women more often expressed their objection to donating their own organs (8% vs 4%; $P = .000$). In addition, a significant relationship was observed between declaring consent to giving one's organs for transplantation after death and knowing a transplant recipient ($P = .033$). The mean age of respondents giving consent to having their organs removed for transplantation after death was 36.9 years; those who did not agree were 42.9 on average, and the undecided, 35.9 years old.

Consent to Becoming a Related Donor

To the question of becoming a related donor, 11% of the respondents answered "definitely yes." Their ages ranged from 18 to 65 (mean, 33.8). Another 43% answered "yes" (mean age, 37.1 years). There were 8% who were against becoming related donors, and their mean age was 39.8 years. Four percent answered "definitely not," and the mean age in that group was 31 years. Finally, 33% were undecided; their mean age was 40 years.

Regulations Concerning the Removal of Organs From Dead Donors

According to every third respondent, presumed consent is sufficient to remove organs. Women opted for presumed consent more often than men (39% vs 24%; $P = .021$); 31% of the respondents recognized the consent of the family of the deceased person as necessary (22% of women and 40% of men). Overall, 15% believed that the deceased person's consent needed to be expressed before death (17% of women and 14% of men); 9% did not know whose consent was necessary (10% of women and 9% of men). Four percent of respondents, both women and men, thought that

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