



Innovative virtual satellite event highlights global shortage in organ donation

5 October 2009 -- Berlin -- Less than 10 per cent of the estimated global need for donated organs is currently being met. To focus attention on this gap on World Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation, Geneva-based ONG Fairtransplant and the World Health Organization connected international organ donation and transplantation experts from around the world in a "virtual satellite" broadcast.

A series of "real time" interviews took place across international time zones over the course of a single day. Leading surgeons, public health experts, government officials and organ donation association representatives reported on progress and discussed the challenges of increasing donations from deceased persons.

Preliminary 2008 data collected in the Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation¹ showed 69,000 kidney transplants, up 0.4 per cent from 2007, and 20,300 liver transplants, up 1.05 percent from 2007. There were an estimated 5,400 heart transplants performed in 2008.

Although most transplanted organs come from deceased persons, 35 per cent came from living donors, mainly kidney and to a lesser extent liver. In many countries, organ supply from deceased persons could be increased to meet transplantation needs, if appropriate, effective legal and administrative frameworks and donor programmes were put in place. This would also dramatically decrease transplant tourism and opportunities for illegal, profit-driven trade in organ harvesting and transplantation.

As well as drawing attention to the organ supply gap, the virtual satellite event highlighted recent progress in many countries to increase organ donations from deceased donors, improve access to transplantation and develop national self-sufficiency in service delivery. Notable examples included:

- Oman, where, in 2008 more Omani people underwent transplantations, rather than going abroad for the procedure;
- Canada, where the national system will be restructured to increase donation rates and promote social awareness of the benefits of donation from deceased persons;
- India, where a vast federal programme to increase donation from deceased donors is announced, Jaipur is one of the places pioneering such donations;
- Japan, where the law has been amended recently to remove obstacles to donations from deceased donors. This law will enable Japan to better meet patient's needs in transplantation.

Other highlights from the 2008 Global Observatory preliminary data included decreases in living kidney transplants of 67 per cent in Pakistan from 2006 to 2008 and of 36 per cent in Philippines from 2007 to 2008 reflecting the stop put by these countries to transplant tourism.

The virtual satellite event was broadcast live at the 2009 Organ Donation Congress, taking place in Berlin, and will be available via the Internet after the congress (<http://www.fairtransplant.org>).

The World Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation is celebrated each year to highlight the importance of organ donation and non-commercial organ transplantation as a vital health care service and act of human solidarity.

For more information, contact: Prof. Philippe Morel (Philippe.Morel@hcuge.ch) and Dr Pietro Majno (Pietro.Majno@hcuge.ch). Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève (HUG) - Fairtransplant

¹ The Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation is a collaborative effort of the World Health Organization and the Organización Nacional de Trasplantes (ONT) of Spain. The World Day was organized in collaboration with ONT, The Transplantation Society (TTS) and thank to the support of the German Foundation for Organ Transplantation (DSO)