Deceased and Living Organ Donation in Iran

To the Editor:

We have read the article written by AlKhawari et al. (1) published in the June 2005 issue of this journal with full interest. The authors have quoted sentences with reference to our article (2). Because certain phrases may be confusing to some readers, we would like to elucidate a few points. The authors stated that ‘Donation is sanctioned by religious and national law in Iran (although there is some religious dissent from the “official” Iranian Islamic position)’, but a few additional points require clarification.

The consensus of physicians and religious leaders has paved the way for progress of transplantation programs in Iran in recent years. Based on the rulings by the spiritual leaders, deceased donation has been accepted in Iran from the 1960s (3) and the ‘Organ Transplantation and Brain Death Act’ was approved by parliament in 2000 (4,5). Although the rate of deceased donation in Iran has been relatively low in the past, it is hard to conclude that religious dissent is an important problem. From our point of view, there are basically no religious disagreements on organ donation between jurisprudents. The main barriers for deceased donation in our country are some sociocultural beliefs and strong feelings of family members. Although there are no published articles on this issue, some studies show that most important sociocultural obstacles consist of a feeling of anxiety about rumors and accusation of their loved ones’ organ vending, faith in the miracle of God and fear of insufficient attempts to save the life of their patient (6,7). Fortunately, by close cooperation of scientific centers with mass media, public awareness is increasing. This progress, in addition to the establishment of the Iranian Network for Transplant Organ Procurement (IRANTOP), has resulted in an increase of deceased donation in recent years. IRANTOP organized 17 centers to find patients with brain death and 7 centers to obtain tissues and organs for transplantation (8). Consequently, the annual rate of organ transplantation from deceased donors has increased from 0.3 per million of population (pmp) in 2000 to 1.7 pmp in 2004 (9). Meanwhile, living donation activity has been 22.9 pmp in 2004 (9). Further details on the issue of unrelated living donation programs can be found in other similar published articles (2, 5,10–12).

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References