

Monday, February 20, 2012

[Health](#)

February 16, 2012, 9:00 am

In Israel, a New Approach to Organ Donation

By [DANIELLE OFRI, M.D.](#)



Nicole

Bengiveno/The New York Times

¶ One of the most agonizing spots in medicine is the “transplant list.” When I’ve referred patients for organ transplant — heart, liver, kidney — it is the start of an anguished wait. The clock ticks for my patient as we watch her clinical status decline, all the while harboring that excruciating hope that someone will die soon enough to make an organ available. In the case of kidney donation, which can come from a live donor, it is the desperate hope that someone will decide to make this enormous personal sacrifice.

¶ Some of my patients have died waiting, which is, sadly, not an unusual outcome. It is estimated that 18 patients on the waiting list in America die every day. In the United States, as in many countries, we rely on a simple system of altruism, or what might be called the opt-in approach. We hope that people will sign organ donor cards because they think it is the right thing to do, or

that families will consent to donation after a loved one has had brain death because it will help someone else. But these mechanisms do not result in nearly enough organs for all the patients who need them.

¶ Other countries, like Spain and Austria, have tried an opt-out approach, called presumed consent. Every patient who dies is assumed to have consented to organ donation, unless they have specifically declined. However, this hasn't necessarily increased the number of organ donations, in part because doctors find it extremely difficult to go against family wishes if surviving family members are strongly opposed to donation.

¶ A third way to increase donations is being pioneered in Israel. Until now, Israel ranked at the bottom of Western countries on organ donation. Jewish law proscribes desecration of the dead, which has been interpreted by many to mean that Judaism prohibits organ donation. Additionally, there were rabbinic issues surrounding the concept of brain death, the state in which organs are typically harvested. As a result, many patients died waiting for organs.

¶ So Israel has decided to try a new system that would give transplant priority to patients who have agreed to donate their organs. In doing so, it has become the first country in the world to incorporate "nonmedical" criteria into the priority system, though medical necessity would still be the first priority.



Dr. Jacob Lavee

¶ The Israeli program was initiated by Dr. Jacob Lavee, a cardiothoracic surgeon who heads the heart transplant program of Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer. In 2005, he had two ultra-Orthodox, Haredi Jewish patients on his ward who were awaiting heart transplants. The patients confided in him that they would never consider donating organs, in accordance with Haredi Jewish beliefs, but that they had absolutely no qualms about accepting organs from others.

¶ That Haredi Jews would not donate organs was a well-known fact in Israel. But this was the first time anyone had openly admitted the paradox to Dr. Lavee.

¶The unfairness of a segment of society unwilling to donate organs, but happy to accept them, nagged at Dr. Lavee. After he operated on both patients, giving each a new lease on life, he put together a proposal that would give priority to those patients willing to donate their organs.

¶Working with rabbis, ethicists, lawyers, academics and members of the public, he and other medical experts worked to create a new law in 2010, which will take full effect this year: if two patients have identical medical needs for an organ transplant, priority will be given to the patient who has signed a donor card, or whose family member has donated an organ in the past.

¶A critical component of the law's success was engaging the country's highly influential religious leadership, which had long been resistant to organ donation. Even among the half of the country that is devoutly secular, when faced with death and whether to donate organs. "Suddenly the families become very religious," said Dr. Yael Haviv, the medical director of the organ donation program at Sheba. "Suddenly they ask the rabbis."

¶But in the Talmud, saving a life supersedes most everything, and many commandments may be transgressed if the goal is to save a life. Based on this, the argument could be made that organ donation fulfilled one of the highest religious virtues. The lawmakers also agreed on a definition of brain death that was acceptable to the vast majority of rabbis (though not the ultra-Orthodox Haredi), as well as local imams, making organ donation kosher to a large segment of the population.

¶This was accompanied by a huge public awareness campaign about organ donation, with radio, TV, billboard and newspaper ads promoting the new priority system and countering the perception that Jewish law forbids donation. Shopping centers and coffee houses were blanketed with organ donation information. The response was overwhelming, as people registered in droves as potential donors.

¶"We were swamped," says Tamar Ashkenazi, the director of the National Transplant Center of Israel. The machine that prints the organ donation cards usually handles 3,000 a month — 5,000 if two workers are dedicated full-time to operating it. During the 10 weeks of the publicity campaign, 70,000 Israelis registered for organ donation cards.

¶The consent rate from families has already increased, and the number of organs available for patients has increased in parallel. Transplants have so far increased by more than 60 percent over all this year.

¶Other aspects of the new law provide "fair compensation" for living donors that covers 40 days of lost wages, plus expenses related to the donation. "This serves to remove the disincentives to donation," Dr. Lavee says. Kidney transplants from live donors — nearly always from family members of patients — increased dramatically.

¶The new system, though, is not without its critics. Many say that any "nonmedical" factors in organ allocation are inherently unethical. Some say that the law enshrines religious discrimination, since Haredi patients decline to donate based on their religious beliefs.

¶But many feel that the new law adds a measure of fairness to the process, and now there are more organs available for everyone. It will be interesting to see how things play out when the priority system goes into effect on April 1.

¶*Danielle Ofri is the author of three books, including “[Medicine in Translation: Journeys With My Patients.](#)” She is an associate professor of medicine at New York University School of Medicine and editor in chief of the [Bellevue Literary Review](#).*

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1.



- Jen
- Seattle, WA

The idea that I could, in death, bring life, sight, or function to somebody else, is so incredibly profound that I can't believe everybody wouldn't jump at the chance to do something so altruistic and amazing with their bodies.

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1

2.



- Preeti
- Delhi, India

The mechanisms of altered human behavior are always very interesting to observe. A few laws here and there(for the greater good) and viola everybody(with prior differing thoughts) jumps on the social bandwagon.

But personal benefit before all, thats what drives society. Always has, always will. Mine before yours. Makes me wonder sometimes, was communism really such a bad thing?

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1

3.



- [lvt](#)
- Iowa

How often have you heard someone say they do not want to give blood or be a potential bone marrow donor because it might hurt or that needles are scary. We need to reason responsibly.

Someone facing death is the highest priority. What I fear or "dislike" is irrelevant in comparison and I find it surprising and even offensive for adults to even make such statements.

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1

4.



- o [Mark Twain](#)
- o On the Mississippi

The Talmud says whoever saves one life saves the whole world. We can't all be a Mr. Schindler but many us of can still save the world.

I think it's good that in Israel some are emphasizing the Talmud but they need to make it more an imperative for those whose belief systems now prohibits them from donating to save a life. Perhaps whoever can change a small group of people can save the world thousands of times. Who can do this? It will only take one man or one woman to step up to that sect and change their world forever and then they too can start to save the world.

- o [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- o Recommended2

5.



- o [Dave Null](#)
- o Claremont, California

As anyone in the health care system knows, we face a similar problem in the US. GROUPS of people (not individuals) who are happy to accept donated organs and blood but rarely donate. People should confront the consequence of their decision and be denied organs or blood if they refuse to donate or be potential donors.

- o [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- o Recommended1

6.



- o [Greg](#)
- o Bangor

I am a kidney donor - in Israel. I donated to my wife. if I had a third kidney to spare, I would be happy to do it again, even to a stranger. (it's the closest that us guys can get to the miracle of giving birth) The reluctance that many families felt to donating organs from the deceased for perceived religious reasons, is eroding. More and more rabbinical authorities enthusiastically support it, including the difficult issue of defining death as brain death.

I personally know of 7 altruistic kidney donations from live donors to strangers, done

recently, here in Israel. All donors had strong religious motivations, including 2 Christians from the UK, and 4 ultra Orthodox Israelis

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:06 a.m.](#)
- Recommended2



7.

- Lord Farquaad
- New England

Sounds like an important public health tool for Israel. But how many transplant candidates will sign their donor cards in hospital, sort of a medical equivalent to the wartime “getting religion” in the foxhole? Will there be some kind of time limit, i.e. you have to have signed it >6 months ago? Will Haredis be effectively DENIED solid organ transplants?

U.S. issues are different and I have some concerns about the increased intrusion of nonmedical criteria into the process of organ allocation.

The transplantation of solid organs other than kidneys is a pretty harsh business. I have had to inform many a patient with endstage liver disease and kidney failure from hepatorenal syndrome (HRS) that I will not perform dialysis because they are not listed or imminently “listable” for a liver transplant; dialysis is medically futile in HRS without liver transplant. So for example I managed a patient with HRS a few months ago, who was not “listable” ‘cause he’d not been sober for >6 months. Despite plenty of contact with Hepatology he had never been informed that he had to be completely abstinent from alcohol. He recovered some renal function and went home, but then was admitted 2 weeks later with renal failure and quickly died without dialysis.

So, picture now having to speak to a patient and say that, thanks to President Santorum’s new law, since the patient didn’t sign their donor card >6 months ago they will not be given priority for a transplant.....

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:43 p.m.](#)
- Recommended1



8.

- Joe
- Amherst

Not only is it unethical, but morally despicable that thousands die each year unnecessarily because people are not allowed to sell one of their kidneys to another in need. Thank you

Al Gore and the other senators and representatives that condemned so many to death by making it illegal to sell a kidney in the US. That's a moral solution? Not one senator or congressman who passed that legislation donated a kidney while alive except Jake Garn, and he only did it for his own daughter. How many of those who think it is immoral to allow a market for kidneys has donated one of his or her kidneys to save a life? If people really believed what they say, there would be no waiting list for kidneys, but it's all talk and moral outrage about markets in body parts while real people die for no reason. Just one more example of death and pain caused by the supposed good intentions of those with the power to impose their morality on others.

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:42 p.m.](#)



9.

- Jon D
- NM

I know that many humans are obsessed with living longer and longer.

However, although right now I want to keep living, I know that one day I will still die.

And most people in the world will never have access to a life-extending organ transplant.

And even if more people get life-extending organ transplants, those people will still all die.

C'est la vie...et la morte.

Plus, my organs are mine to donate or not donate; no one has the right make that decision for me.

Edward Abbey, commenting on capitalism, wrote that "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of a cancer cell."

Trying to extend life at all costs is a logical extension of that same ideology.

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:42 p.m.](#)
- Recommended2



10.

- sadie
- sf bay area

I am a kidney transplant recipient, thanks to a deceased donor. The most frequent reasons I hear for not registering to be an organ donor are the ick factor, lack of inertia (don't plan on dying, so what's the hurry), and lack of knowledge about who can be a donor: I'm too old, I take X medications which means I can't, my religion won't let me etc. A public service campaign that includes religious leaders would go a long way toward changing attitudes- as it seems to have for many people in Israel.

Recent CA law requires DMV workers to directly ask persons applying for a license if they do or do not want to register, or they can decline to answer at that time. Hopefully this will reach some of those people who just "never get around to registering" to donate. Amazingly, this even managed to upset people- how dare someone ask me that and so on.

It sounds great on paper to say if you don't sign your card you don't get a kidney, or blood etc., but the reality is much more complicated. I don't begrudge someone who needs a kidney but is not a registered organ donor, most people are just misinformed, not malicious or selfish.

An opt out system would be good. Regardless, a real campaign needs to happen in our country, engaging religious leaders and general practitioners, it needs to become part of our dialogue in the same way that end of life wishes do in general.

If you haven't already, visit DonateLife.net and register- it's a beautiful thing. With gratitude to my donor.

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:42 p.m.](#)
- Recommended3



11.

- Josh Hill
- New London
- Trusted

I've long favored this. Why shouldn't those who are generous enough to sign donor cards receive priority if they themselves need organs? The only amorality I see here lies in people who aren't willing to sign donor cards receiving organs ahead of those who are.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 6:19 p.m.](#)
- Recommended4



5.

- Lord Farquaad
- New England

"I've long favored this". Wow, such moral certitude. Dr. Hill, I think it's safe to say that you have come to this opinion despite having zero clinical experience in transplantation and/or zero training in medical ethics.

So Raj Rajaratnam was just sent to a medical prison in Massachusetts for an 11-year sentence. From what I hear in the news, he is highly likely to soon require renal replacement therapy, i.e. hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or a kidney transplant.

Let me guess, Dr. Hill, you're also opposed to kidney transplantation for federal prisoners.

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:41 p.m.](#)
- Recommended1



12.

- [Richard Schmidt](#)
- Concord, NC

This article presents a fascinating moral dilemma affecting health care and beyond. I must confess that I am not especially sympathetic to people who would refuse on ethical/religious grounds to donating an organ, but seem not to mind on the same grounds being on the receiving end when needed. They sound less Jewish than Republican, but I digress.

When I donate blood I feel good. But I cannot tell you how many people say to me, "Oh I could never donate blood." Why? "Oh because I hate needles" But apparently they would not mind receiving a blood transfusion to save them from dying.

In the final analysis, it seems to me this is all about community . . . getting past our petty personal likes and dislikes (I count religious restrictions as such) and deciding that we are either part of a community of humans or we are not. I like the Israeli agreement, because it seems fair, but I wonder how long it will hold up in real situations. I am thinking of people here, especially young healthy people who refuse to buy health insurance, but who still assume they will be cared for in an emergency. They are acting out of personal greed, but still wish to join the community of mankind when it becomes convenient. Largely, they are correct. They will be treated in an emergency. I wonder how it will play out when, in Israel, ten people need organs, but only nine are available. One will die because of his own personal choice. How will that scenario be viewed?

Very interesting.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 3:10 p.m.](#)
- Recommended5

13.



- o debbie
- o chicago

I wish US leaders had the courage to do the same here.

- o [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:42 a.m.](#)
- o Recommended7

14.



- o Scott J
- o Seattle, Wa

I've been saying for years that people who do not agree to donate should not receive donated organs; I've even considered adding a note to that effect to my card, though this would probably not have legal weight. Israel is much further towards understanding this basic ethical issue than we are. Congratulations to them and all the lives this will save.

- o [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:42 a.m.](#)
- o Recommended10

4.



- CB
- New York, NY

Why have you been saying this for years? What's your reasoning? I see arrangement like this as a shift away from donating and toward trading. Are you sure that's what you want?

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.](#)

5.



- [Carrie](#)
- Baltimore, MD

I totally agree with you, Scott. I have also been saying for years that people who are willing to donate should take priority in receiving organs. I think this also

applies to blood, bone marrow, cord blood, and any other bodily tissues that people need. Isn't this just a manifestation of the golden rule?

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 10:22 a.m.](#)
- Recommended6



15.

- EE
- Canada

Wow! Great idea! Simple. Fair. Obvious. Successful.

I think this article is going to have a massive effect around the world. I can almost hear it being forwarded to Ministries of Health.

Mazel Tov, Drs Lavee and Ofri. Today, you've just provided a viable strategy for backlogged transplant systems in the developed world.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:42 a.m.](#)
- Recommended4



4.

- CB
- New York, NY

I'd rethink that. Dr. Lavee came up with a system that is at heart a sort of social engineering in a nation that has a substantial portion of the population inclined to follow customs specific to one religion. Dr. Lavee is trying to offer an incentive that will cast those religious customs in a new light simply because the religious dogma causes supply and demand problems specific to Israel.

Is this an appropriate model for the whole world? Not necessarily. Is it ethical to bestow an advantage on one group of people who have banded together to advance their own interest at the expense of everyone else? I'm not so sure.

The decision to donate organs is highly personal. Should organ donation be treated like an insurance policy? Help our group and our group will help you? I don't think so.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1



- 5.
- Josh Hill
 - New London
 - Trusted

CB, why should people who are too selfish to donate organs, or believe it is against their religion, receive organs that could go to those who were generous enough to sign donor cards? That would seem to be unethical in any moral system. "Do unto others . . . "

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 6:23 p.m.](#)
- Recommended7



- 6.
- Lord Farquaad
 - New England

You're right, Dr. Hill. When people who don't sign their donor cards develop organ failure we should just take them out back and shoot them.

- [Feb. 18, 2012 at 2:41 p.m.](#)
- Recommended1



- 16.
- [markzero](#)
 - Texas

It's an interesting idea, worth trying. But let's remember that people who are on waiting lists for organs sometimes (often?) end up with other organs that are rendered unharvestable due to either damage from the disease that ruined the organ that needs replacing or the stress on the body during the wait on the list. So there would still be shortages, even if everyone agreed.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:41 a.m.](#)



- 17.
- Emily
 - PA

Some have suggested going one step further and preventing those who opt out from receiving donations.....

<http://dagyo.com/LendAHand>

Also very funny!

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:39 a.m.](#)



18.

- CB
- New York, NY

Mr. Undis should have disclosed that he is the founder and executive director of Lifesharers. I invite readers to have a look at my reply to him, in which I noted the heavily conservative bent of the entire organization, and offered dissenting views. I would also ask that Mr. Undis disclose his relationship, if any, to the [donatelifenet](http://donatelifenet.org) organization, which accepts donations of the monetary type.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:38 a.m.](#)



3.

- Dave Undis
- Nashville, TN

Dear CB:

I replied to your other message below.

LifeSharers is a completely nonpartisan organization. Everyone in the United States is welcome to join.

I have no relationship to donatelifenet. LifeSharers has no relationship to [donatelifenet](http://donatelifenet.org) either, but we do accept monetary donations at www.lifesharers.org.

Dave Undis
Executive Director
LifeSharers

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.](#)
- Recommended2

19.



- yehudis
- jerusalem

The stringency in Jewish law is only on organs "harvested" (what an ugly word) from the almost-but-not-quite dead. There is a question of "possible murder" in the language of one of the greatest halachic authorities, and this complicates the issue of organ donation greatly. This is the dirty underside of the wonderful life-saving techniques of organ transplant, and the determination of death has already been a worrisome tale of diverging medical opinions, changing standards--clearly a system that is utilitarian in nature, with theoretical models racing to keep up with the ever-growing demand for organs. From a Times article of a while back:

"Organ transplantation must abide by the so-called dead-donor rule: a person has to be declared dead before any vital organs can be removed. Yet organs have to be alive if there is any hope of successful transfer to a recipient. Medical professionals have handled this paradoxical situation — finding a dead body with live organs — by fashioning a category of people with beating hearts who are said to be brain-dead, usually after a traumatic head injury, and who are considered just as dead as if they had rigor mortis."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/magazine/20organ-t.html?pagewanted=all>

And for more confusing information about the brain and its apparent irreversible vegetative state:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/magazine/can-ambien-wake-minimally-con...>

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:38 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1

20.



- in the know
- NYC

This speaks to the secular nature of Israeli society. While many interpret Jewish law as forbidding organ donation, the state does not stand in the way of promoting it to save lives. Ditto w stem cell research and abortion.

Contrast this w similar issues in the US where religious views conflict w government policy....

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 4:30 p.m.](#)

- Recommended20



21.

- [Misti Burmeister](#)
- <a href=

Great article! What a brilliant idea... you want a transplant? Then, be willing to give that wish you want to receive ... the idea reminds me of the idea behind powerful leadership - want them to care about their work? Care about them!

Thank you for your post!

Misti Burmeister
www.InspirionLLC.com

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 3:36 p.m.](#)
- Recommended6



4.

- CB
- New York, NY

This is not equivalent to "the idea behind powerful leadership." It's far more nuanced and ethically complex.

Is an organization being truly responsible when it invites, rather aggressively, people to join a group that promises better access to donated organs if members pledge to donate to each other first, and only THEN to the national donor pool? It's an unabashed effort to bypass the impartial national system to get preferential treatment.

How indeed did Steve Jobs (and apparently a disproportionate number of others) obtain their transplant organs in Tennessee, where Lifesharers is based?

We're not talking about social clubs. We're talking about human lives. Arrangements like this, while legal, skirt very close to organ-trading cabals. Too close for my comfort.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 8:29 a.m.](#)



- 5.
- Lizbeth
 - NY

To CB--Well, what's wrong with "trading" organs? I've seen multiple articles in publications (I can't remember what women's magazine I was reading) where "donation chains" are praised--person A donates a kidney to person B, B's friend/family donates to someone else, etc.

Or even on a more personal level--my uncle donated his kidney to his cousin. Should he not have been allowed to do so, since that's not fair to people on the waiting list? I would certainly donate to a member of my family or friends before donating to a stranger. What is this but an arrangement that benefits a larger group of people?

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:27 p.m.](#)
- Recommended5



- 22.
- SF MD
 - NY

Our citizens make economic choices every day about their lives (and often choose to shorten their lives for financial reasons). Coal miners, dentists, military servicemen and professional athletes enter careers with known risks (ranging from lung disease to suicide to brain trauma) often for economic gain. Transplants should be the same. If we allowed people to sell a kidney there would be no wait-lists and there would be plenty of donors. Voluntary systems still favor the rich (how else does one explain Steve Jobs' ability to get an organ quickly). A pay-in system would also allow for cash to come in to a system to subsidize transplants for the poor.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 2:07 p.m.](#)
- Recommended2



- 4.
- [rrsafety](#)
 - Boston

In what way did Steve Jobs get an organ "quickly". How much quicker? Quicker compared to what or whom? Are you suggesting Jobs jumped the line? If he did, how so?

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 3:35 p.m.](#)
- Recommended2



5.

- SF MD
- NY

Take a look here: <http://articles.cnn.com/2009-06-24/health/liver.transplant.priority.list...>

If you worked in a healthcare system with a transplant program you would quickly learn that anonymous, "fairly designed" systems can be gamed. Cut the line? Perhaps not - depending on what one means by "cut". Game the system? Why Tennessee for his transplant?

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 4:24 p.m.](#)
- Recommended5



23.

- morey
- dallas

This brings up an ethical and legal conundrum. No one would agree that the State has rights over the body of every citizen who dies. But when faced with a situation where another citizen's life can be saved with a cadaver organ, well..

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 1:52 p.m.](#)
- Recommended3



24.

- Jack
- Boston, MA

Absolutely brilliant idea!!

However, donor card, by law, must trump any surviving family wishes, or it will not work to increase organ supply.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 1:52 p.m.](#)
- Recommended9



- 4.
- Dave Undis
 - Nashville, TN

Under the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act of 2006, which has been enacted in over 40 states, registration as an organ donor trumps the wishes of surviving family.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 2:07 p.m.](#)
- Recommended7



- 5.
- [rrsafety](#)
 - Boston

By the way, "organ donor cards" are not used to identify donors any more. One must really become a registered donor through the driver's license process or through an online registry through DonateLife.Net. Donor cards are seldom found and identified, that is why it is necessary to be registered on a computer list through the DMV.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 3:35 p.m.](#)
- Recommended3



- Brown RN
- Virgin Islands

If the Haredi are not allowed to donate, then they shouldn't, by their own law, be allowed to receive organs. Wouldn't they be like Christian Scientists or Jehovah's Witnesses in refusing medical care?

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 1:52 p.m.](#)
- Recommended7



- 4.
- Menashe
 - New York, NY

I'm not an expert, but my understanding is that it's more of a stringency that everyone is urged to follow than a biblical command. Hence, they choose to follow that stringency, but have no issue taking organs from those who don't. Another way of looking at it is that if in mortal danger, they may violate a commandment (i.e. one may take non-kosher medicine or violate the sabbath if medically necessary). So, if in mortal danger, they may take an organ that someone else donated in violation of the law, but that does not give them the right to donate. As the author of the article pointed out, this is open to much interpretation and many rigorously Orthodox Jews have found ways to become organ donors while complying with strict parameters of the religious laws.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 4:29 p.m.](#)
- Recommended3



- 5.
- Stacy H
 - New York, NY

Menashe, I understand that argument, but it's still not "kosher" to me. It is saying that they may take part in breaking a rule to save their OWN life, but not break that same rule in order for them to save one, or potentially many other people's lives - people in "mortal danger" just like they were. It is selfishness taken to a new extreme.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 12:38 a.m.](#)
- Recommended8



- 6.
- Abbi
 - Israel

Haredim are not against medical care (if anything, they are very adept at finding the very best care). They do not consider brain death to be real death. Therefore, it's almost impossible to harvest live organs(since waiting for the heart to stop beating renders most organs unharvestable). They are also concerned about

leaving the body whole for the "next world".

Sticky theological/ethical issues, nothing to do with receiving medical care.

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:05 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1

26.



- Dave Undis
- Nashville, TN

LifeSharers members receive preferred access to organs after they've been members for 180 days. This creates an incentive for people to join before they know they need organs.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 1:51 p.m.](#)
- Recommended4

27.



- Jeff
- Atlanta, GA

As a kidney donor myself, I'm not sure what the "enormous personal sacrifice" is? I donated 9 years ago, the procedure was done laproscopically, I was out of the hospital the next day, recovery was easy and, like almost all kidney donors, I have had no side effects or complications to date. In fact, my understanding is that, statistically, kidney donors outlive non-donors (granted, that's probably because the pool of kidney donors is necessarily healthy at the time of donation).

The bottom line is that it was easy, things returned to normal quickly, I hardly ever think about the fact that I did it and, most importantly, it helped save my Dad's life. I think there's a misconception that it's some big ordeal and it's not.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 11:19 a.m.](#)
- Recommended18

28.



- Carla
- Santa Fe, NM

Finally! I would go one step further and guarantee people who donate a kidney or liver lobe an absolute top spot on the waiting list for any organ. But this is an excellent start.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 11:19 a.m.](#)
- Recommended7



- 4.
- [rrsafety](#)
 - Boston

This is already the case. Living donors in the US get top waitlist ranking should they be in need of a donation of that organ.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 3:35 p.m.](#)
- Recommended5



- 29.
- [GlassHospital](#)
 - Tulsa, OK

What I like about this proposal is that Dr. Lavee worked to address what he perceived to be a basic inequity.

He went about it in a highly diplomatic way, involving what seems to be all the stakeholders in such a contentious debate, and won over people with even the most intransigent-seeming positions on the issue.

Good reporting, Dr. Ofri! Thanks.

-Dr. John

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 11:19 a.m.](#)
- Recommended21



- 30.
- Anne
 - Maine

Consistent with "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

- [Feb. 19, 2012 at 11:19 a.m.](#)

- Recommended15



31.

- [Mama Rachel, MD](#)
- Solana Beach, CA

This is simply genius. Imagine the response in the US if a real campaign were launched to promote it!

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 11:19 a.m.](#)
- Recommended6



32.

- Dave Undis
- Nashville, TN

Registered organ donors in the United States can also get priority access to donated organs by joining LifeSharers. Membership is free at www.lifesharers.org. There is no age limit, parents can enroll their minor children, and no one is excluded due to any pre-existing medical condition.

- [Feb. 16, 2012 at 10:09 a.m.](#)
- Recommended6

[Read All 8 Replies](#)



4.

- Dave Undis
- Nashville, TN

Dear CB:

If selfishness saves lives by increasing the number of organ donors, isn't that a good thing? Under the UNOS/OPTN system that relies only on altruism, every year over 7,000 people die waiting for organ transplants while their neighbors bury or cremate over 20,000 organs that could have saved those lives.

Also, who is being selfish? Is it LifeSharers members, who agree to donate their organs when they die? Or is it the people who refuse to register as organ donors but still want to be eligible to receive organ transplants?

LifeSharers is nothing like a "private country club". Everyone is welcome to join, and membership is free. We don't discriminate on the basis of political philosophy, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical handicap, health status, marital status, or economic status.

LifeSharers doesn't confer a moral advantage to one person over another. LifeSharers members choose to offer their organs first to other registered organ donors in an attempt to create an incentive for non-donors to donate. It is their legal right to do so.

- [Feb. 17, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.](#)
- Recommended5



5.

- Lord Farquaad
- New England

Dr. Undis, I have some questions regarding LifeSharers.

Unlike the NKR, which has an MAB full of transplant docs/surgeons, etc., your list of "Advisors" contains no such expertise. Why is that?

If I sign up, how does LifeSharers guarantee that UNOS will direct my organs to another LifeSharers member?

From your website, the relevant section pasted below is rather opaque and confusing:

"If the organ is from a LifeSharers member, the highest-ranked qualified LifeSharers member (if any) on the UNOS match run is the designated donee of that organ if that person is a suitable match. This is based on the language in the LifeSharers membership agreement (and on the LifeSharers donor card):We rely on the deceased member's next-of-kin to make sure that the member's wishes are honored.... We rely on the OPO to obtain the UNOS match run that will help identify the designated donee for the organ, and to facilitate the organ procurement process. "

Best I can tell, LifeSharers does not have a direct role in organ allocation. It certainly has no advisory input from the transplant community.

I think that the average respondent who signs up with you and sends you \$\$\$s would assume that you have some kind of direct role in organ allocation and can direct their organs to another LifeSharers member. But that does not seem to be the case.

Please explain.

- [Feb. 20, 2012 at 11:05 a.m.](#)