



Published on *The Jewish Week* (<http://www.thejewishweek.com>)

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Tuesday, December 7, 2010

Rabbi Heshie Billet

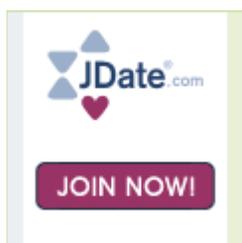
For the record, I wish to clarify my position on the halachic definition of death as pertains to the Dec. 3 story on the Rabbinical Council of America report on brain death and the manner in which my views were cited ("RCA Backs Off Stand On Brain Death For Transplants").

I never suggested that the RCA report might lead to the death of anyone. The RCA issued a study on the definition of death in which it presented all of the halachic alternatives. The report was carefully done in an objective manner by excellent rabbinic scholars who had no agenda in doing their study.

They presented a majority opinion that rejected brain death and instead advocated for other alternatives. They presented brain death, as well, as a minority opinion. The consequence of the majority opinion would be the inability of Orthodox Jews to donate organs for transplants.

Therefore, I said that in my opinion, the minority opinion, which accepts brain death as the criterion for death, should be embraced by the rabbinic community. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to allow people of a particular group to receive vital organ transplants if they will not donate organs as well. Failure of the Orthodox community to donate organs could have dire consequences for that community if there is a backlash in the medical community to such a trend.

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This is important in both the diaspora and Israel. In fact, in Israel the majority of rabbinic authorities as well as doctors in the religious Zionist Torah-educated community use brain death as the criterion for death. You cannot have a viable state today that denies its citizens the lifesaving possibility of organ donation.

At the same time, it is important in my view not to impose any definition of death as a matter of public policy. The religious rights of citizens of all halachic points of view should be respected and protected.

Woodmere, L.I.

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Source URL (retrieved on 12/14/2010 - 12:10): http://www.thejewishweek.com/editorial_opinion/letters/favors_minority_opinion