

## Rabbis criticize report seen as hindering organ transplants

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**By Stewart Ain, N.Y. Jewish Week** | **0 comments**

A move by the central body of American Modern Orthodox rabbis to reconsider its acceptance of brain death as the criteria for death under Jewish law has led to charges of anti-Semitism from one leading rabbi and broad concern that Orthodox Jews may face trouble in securing organ transplants.

The fierce reaction is to a 110-page study prepared over four years by the Vaad Halacha, or Jewish Law Committee, of the Rabbinical Council of America, which re-evaluated the previously accepted position that neurological, or "brain death," is the accepted Jewish definition of death.

The report presented the opinion of a majority of halachic decisors who say that death is defined by the cessation of breathing and heart beats. Waiting for cardiac/respiratory death disqualifies both the heart and lungs for organ transplant.

A torrent of criticism has met the report, most pointedly from Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, the leading proponent of the brain death standard. Tendler attacked the paper for its "stupidity" with respect to medical issues and described it as both "anti-Jewish" and an "act of anti-Semitism."

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