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## Registered donors to get preference if they need organ

By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH  
15/11/2010

Israel makes history trying to close gap between 10% who have donor cards and 62% willing to donate.

For the first time in the world, the Health Ministry's Israel Transplant will "give priority" in the receipt of organs to people who previously signed an ADI card and gave consent to donate organs after their deaths.

Their immediate family members will also be entitled to this benefit.

The new policy, which is being promoted by a twoweek media campaign that began on Sunday, is aimed at narrowing the gap between the 10 percent of Israelis who are registered as potential donors with ADI and the 62% who, when polled, said they were willing to donate lifesaving organs after they die.

The 2008 organ transplant law included a unique section that gives priority to ADI card holders and their immediate relatives who need a transplant organ. However, due to the need for many technical and other preparations, it has taken more than two years to launch the new policy, which was approved by a majority of experts.

Anyone already registered with ADI or who signs up before December 31, 2011 will be entitled to the priority benefit starting on January 1, 2012, while anyone joining after December 31, 2011 will be entitled to the benefit from three years after the date of signing, according to Israel Transplant, which is chaired by Rambam Medical Center director-general Prof. Rafael Beyar.

Tamar Ashkenazi, Israel Transplant's long-time coordinator, said that she hopes the "bonus" will induce hundreds of thousands of people – from the age of 17 – to register with ADI as potential organ donors. Today, only 547,000 people, or 10% of the population of the requisite age, are registered. ADI is an organization named for Adi Ben-Dror, who died decades ago from the lack of a donor kidney.

Ashkenazi noted that there are two computerized lists of people who need organ transplants, one of those in hospital who urgently need an organ and the other living at home who need one less urgently. Having an ADI card would give "additional points" that are allocated and, through computers, automatically calculate who is most suited for a specific organ among those of a compatible blood type. "The extra points will be a significant addition to those who urgently need an organ," she said.

For a few weeks after the media campaign ends, stands will remain in public places for signing up new ADI members.

People who want an ADI card can call \*6262 or go into the website at [www.kartisadi.org.il](http://www.kartisadi.org.il). The site is

currently in Hebrew but the English, Arabic and Russian versions will be posted within a few days.

Ashkenazi said she hoped everyone who sees the educational campaign in newspaper ads and on TV, radio, Internet and other media will understand how important it is. Israel is the first country in the world with this policy, she explained, because a growing number of countries already have a policy of presumed consent – that if a potential donor goes into lower-brain death did not stipulate before that he opposed the taking of his organs for transplant, he was willing to donate. In Israel, such a policy is unlikely to be adopted, as it would arouse much opposition, especially among religious groups.

“In Austria, which has an active presumed consent policy, around 90% of potential donors are the source of organs,” the Israel Transplant coordinator said. In Spain and other Catholic countries, there is also a high rate of consent, between 70% and 80%.

The media campaign features Yael Aloni, an 11-yearold girl who was in a hospital intensive care unit with severe heart disease; her life was saved in 2008 by the family of a boy who suffered brain death and whose parents donated his heart. Now she is a healthy, normal and functioning child who enjoys all the pleasures of life, thanks to the organ donation.

The campaign slogan is “We all join in; we all sign,” while the ADI slogan is “To give life, to get life.”

A series of opinion surveys conducted at Tel Aviv University last year showed that while 62% of the public are willing to donate organs after their death, just 56% said they were willing to sign an ADI card, but the rate of people who actually have done this is just one in 10. The pollsters also found that 83% believe that organ donation generally saves lives; 36% said that their immediate environment supports giving organs.

The card may stipulate, if requested, that a clergyman chosen by the family give his approval before organs are taken for transplant.

As psychological barriers and concern about the “Evil Eye” are responsible for much of the refusal to sign an ADI card, Israel Transplant notes on its site that people take out life insurance coverage even though it provides benefits after their deaths. It suggests that registering as a potential organ donor is a religious or humanitarian act that could serve to protect the person who signs and earn him a long life.

Over 1,000 Israeli children and adults are waiting for a donor kidney, 150 for a liver, 70 for lungs and 120 for a heart. Just 250 organs are transplanted in an average year, and 100 people die while waiting for one. But 300 more people join the waiting lists annually.



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