

South Wales Argus

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Ethical concerns raised over move to presumed consent for organ donation

By Press Association 2019



Organ donation card

Proposed new legislation to help boost organ donation is ethically unacceptable and risks reducing the number of transplants that can take place, MSPs have been warned.

The Scottish Council on Human Bioethics (SCHB) has highlighted its concerns about the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill, which would move Scotland to a system of presuming consent for donation.

The ethics body claims the organs of up to one million Scots could be removed for transplantation after their death against their will – if legislation is passed in its current form.

Plans to change the donation system have been under discussion at the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee.

From an ethical perspective, the present Bill is completely unacceptable.

Calum MacKellar, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics

Dr Calum MacKellar, the SCHB's director of research, said a situation where organs are removed without consent from those who have died could be considered as "abusive and exploitative by the general public" and "give rise to serious scandal".

He added: "This could eventually undermine trust in the system, thereby reducing the number of organs available.

"The SCHB very much supports, and is fully committed to, increasing the number of donated organs from the deceased for lifesaving transplants.

"However from an ethical perspective, the present Bill is completely unacceptable.

"Of course it is very important to save lives, but this should only be done in an ethical manner."

In the committee's report on the Bill at Stage 1, it said the views of potential donors would be considered.



Health and Sport Committee @SP HealthSport

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing @JoeFitzSNP has responded to the Committee's Stage 1 Report on the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill. #organdonation #optout. You can read the response here: <http://ow.ly/HHIE30nNix6>

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See Health and Sport Committee's other Tweets

Part of the report read: "This Bill aims to provide a framework where the views of the potential donor will take precedence.

"This will mean that in all circumstances it should be the views of the potential donor, where they are known, which determine whether donation goes ahead.

“The Bill also aims to introduce more flexibility in the timing of the authorisation process, in addition to more clarity on authorisation for ‘pre-death procedures’, which may be carried out to increase the likelihood of a successful transplant.”

The report also said some of the recurring themes from respondents to the committee’s survey included concerns over whether there would be adequate opportunities for people to opt-out of the system if they wish to do so.

Analysis published in the document said 68.8% of respondents agree with a move to deemed authorisation, whilst 29.2 % disagree and 2% are neutral.