Year-Over-Year Increases in Organ Donors Are Helping Turn Tragedy Into Hope

2019 on track to be another record year for organ donations, according to the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations.

WASHINGTON (PRWEB) October 11, 2019 -- Based on data for the first eight months of the year, 2019 is on track to see a 9 percent increase in deceased organ donors over 2018. Through August 31, 7,786 deceased donors have provided 23,797 organs for transplant according to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) national database. At this pace, the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) projects 2019 could see an additional 1,000 donors and 3,000 organs transplanted over last year.

“OPOs work every day to save more lives through organ donation and transplantation and to help families honor their loved ones in this most significant way,” said Kelly Ranum, AOPO president and CEO of Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency. “OPOs are committed to continual improvement and are incredibly proud of the year-over-year increases in donors and transplants that have been achieved through education, partnership and process improvements.”

According to organdonor.gov, less than 1 percent of people die in a way that allows for organ donation. The 10,721 deceased donors who provided organs for transplantation in 2018 represented a 4 percent increase over 2017 and a 32 percent increase since 2012.

Zahra Alasadi, now 15, is one of the people whose life has been saved this year through donation and transplantation. The Michigan resident received a heart transplant on Valentine’s Day. “This transplant was a blessing,” said Zahra’s mother, Hana, who now volunteers with her local OPO to promote donation. “We pray for the soul of Zahra’s donor every day.”

AOPO also looked at the impact the opioid crisis has had on organ donation and determined that while drug overdose deaths have contributed some to recent increases, they are not the primary factor affecting growth. All overdose deaths, which includes opioid and all others, have accounted for only about one-third of the growth in organ donors nationally since 2012. More significantly, the increased use of organs from donors who have died from overdose illustrates both that OPOs are successful in their responsibilities of actualizing potential donors, and an important shift in perceptions among transplant professionals and the public about the acceptability of such organs. Drug addiction and overdose do not rule out a person’s opportunity for organ donation.

In 2018, drug overdose deaths of all types accounted for 13 percent of deceased organ donors nationwide, up from 5 percent in 2012. Nationally, stroke and cardiovascular conditions account for larger shares of deceased donors, 26 percent and 18 percent respectively in 2018. This trend continues in 2019, with drug overdose deaths accounting for approximately 12 percent of donors so far this year. An AOPO fact sheet on opioid deaths and organ donation is available here.

“The mission of every OPO is to heal more lives through organ donation and transplantation while honoring the donor and their family. This data shows that donors who have died of an overdose, along with everyone who proactively registers their donation decision, are having a significant impact on the number of lives saved,” Ranum said. AOPO encourages everyone to register their donation decision through their local DMV or at www.registerme.org.
The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations represents the nation’s 58 federally-designated organ procurement organizations. Learn more at www.aopo.org.
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