



Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine

Organ donation: a vital priority for public health

March 3, 2026

Commitment of the French National Academy of Medicine to Organ Donation

On February 17th, 2023, the French National Academy of Medicine held a session dedicated to promoting organ donation, with the aim of increasing the number of transplants, and reducing mortality among patients on the waiting lists. An analysis of the situation in France, compared with Spain's performance, underlines the urgent need to strengthen the national strategy, on the one hand by developing kidney transplantation with living donors and, on the other hand, by addressing the rate of refusal and the distrust among the families of deceased donors.

Kidney transplants from living donors offer the best clinical outcomes. The example of Toulouse University Hospital, which has doubled its activity with 30% of donors being living donors, proves that such progress is possible on a national scale with the support of hospital management, a greater involvement of nephrologists, and the mobilization of surgical and anesthesia teams with an increase in on-call and standby allowances for these specific activities.

Despite a French legislation based on presumed consent, the refusal rate among families of donors in brain-dead or cardiac-arrested cases remains worrying. This distrust, often fueled by a lack of understanding of the criteria for death and the principles of free and anonymous donation, must be addressed by promoting donation through joint efforts by healthcare professionals and patient associations. The success achieved over several years by the Spanish experience is based on a proactive health policy that is largely funded, including medical hospital coordination and continuous evaluation of local successes and failures.

The circumstances of death leading to organ donation in cases of brain death or after circulatory arrest are always sudden and violent. They often generate a complex and persistent grief that requires specific support.

The French National Academy of Medicine solemnly calls on public authorities and hospitals to register and fund organ donation as a top public health priority.

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