



Cadaver Donation to Medical Colleges - The Real Situation in India

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Cadaver is best and silent teacher in medical education. In a survey carried out among medical colleges in Maharashtra (India), a gross insufficiency of cadavers was found in 90.90% of medical colleges [1]. Cadaver is procured in medical colleges by voluntary donation under voluntary body donation programs and facilitated by various facilitators/NGOs like dadhichi deh dan samiti [2], mohan foundation and other regional NGOs. There is also provision of cadaver donation of unclaimed bodies by police as per state Anatomy act and there is clause of postmortem exemption in unclaimed body [3] but Reality is that postmortem is mandatorily done in all unclaimed bodies and unclaimed bodies are of no use for medical education in medical colleges after postmortem and local administration remains silent in relation to donation of unclaimed bodies without postmortem to medical colleges and Institutes to avoid any unnecessary legal conflicts So the contribution of unclaimed body donation to medical colleges of India is very little though Anatomy acts of many states governs to do so. Most of medical colleges and medical Institutes (Government and private both) are dependent mainly on voluntary body donations. As a result, many medical colleges have scarcity of human cadavers and few of them have started to explore other means to carry out medical education like procurement of virtual Dissection tables, preparation of prosected parts to use for years for students or even few are also involved in illegal business by purchasing dead bodies by paying huge amount to some agencies to fulfill requirement of human cadavers. Voluntary body donation is fair process to procure human cadavers but this process needs massive social awareness and a constant motivation by NGOs, conduction of time to time voluntary donation programs by medical colleges and motivation of guru ji, reformers etc to motivate people to donate their bodies after death to medical colleges for noble cause. Body donations are

always done with altruism [3]. Even after pledge, body donations is not always possible due to some hesitation or social pressure. So here comes role of NGOs and facilitators who, at that time, motivate and console family members to donate body of near and dear one to medical colleges as serve to noble cause. This task of motivation and making donation possible is very crucial part of Voluntary body donation programme. There are many other factors which govern voluntary body donations like age, sex, religion, occupation, education, social customs, local rituals and lack of awareness of donation of bodies for social cause etc. [4]. These factors play important role in body donations. As Anatomists we have noticed that social awareness by religious guru play very important role in motivating mass for body donations and also facilitate individual donations thereafter. On our experiences as Anatomists and various unpublished studies have shown that nearly all body donations are being done by Hindu religion only in India. While almost all the religions in the whole world encourage donations in any form. But when the question come to own body donation many of them become silent. Hindu religion is among one of the few of them where donation is in our roots. No one can forget the donation of his own bones by Maharishi Dadhichi for noble cause as per Hindu mythology. As per studies, Hindu religion has shown more willingness to body donations as compared to other religions in India. Most of data are available in literature is related to organ donations not the body donations. Data of religion of people who donated their bodies from Sassoon General Hospital Pune showed that 91% of them were Hindus [5]. If we consider state wise body donations data, Tamil Nadu is epitome of organ donations. Patnik suggested that one should have the habit of donation voluntary the body after death. Voluntary donation of body is not much different from dona-

tion of organ (eye/kidney/live). Only a wish is needed. Decision of any individual to donate his/her body for anatomical examination is a vital contribution toward understanding and advancement of medical science [6]. It is fact that in north India most of body dona-

tions are done from state of Haryana even to other nearby states. It is our experience of our Institute that for past 10 years, nearly all donated bodies are from Hindu 80 %and sikh religion 20%only and no donation from other religions.

States	Total popln	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikhs	Jain
Chandigarh	900,635	707,978	35,548	7,627	145,175	2,592
Delhi	13,850,507	11,358,049	1,623,520	130,319	555,602	155,122
Haryana	21,144,564	18,655,925	1,222,916	27,185	1,170,662	57,167
Himanchal Pradesh	6,077,900	5,800,222	119,512	7,687	72,355	1,408
Jammu and Kashmir	10,143,700	3,005,349	6,793,240	20,299	207,154	2,518
Punjab	24,358,999	8,997,942	382,045	292,800	14,592,387	39,276
Rajasthan	56,507,188	50,151,452	4,788,227	72,660	818,420	650,493
UP	166,197,921	133,979,263	30,740,158	212,578	678,059	207,111
Uttaranchal	8,489,349	7,212,260	1,012,141	27,116	212,025	9,249
Total	307,670,763	239,868,440	46,717,307	798,271	18,451,839	1,124,936
Percentage		77.96	15.18	0.26	5.99	0.36

Table 1: Census date 2001 [7].

If we consider data of census 2011, there is slight decline percentage of hindu population and significant rise in muslim population. But the trend of contribution of body donations religion wise has not changed.

So considering this real situation of cadaver donations in medical colleges, we need to have some central agency who can govern and look after voluntary body donation programme uniformly among all states of India and can monitor these regional activities at central level. This will facilitate uniformity in body donations. Body donations inequality among various regions and religions can be resolved. As a fact, Voluntary body donation programme is uniformly not adopted by many state anatomy acts. So there is need of central Anatomy act which can uniformly adapt voluntary body donation programme and uniform policies can be made for procurement of dead bodies to government and private medical colleges. Formulation of good practices for body donation by the International Federation of Association of Anatomist (IFAA) [8] addresses the ethical issues and calls for transparency in the process of obtaining anatomic material for teaching and research. Appropriate provisions in the Anatomy Act can provide for a legislative backup to achieve these good practices. Central anatomy act can also have some provision of medical benefits or other benefits to

Donor’s family amongst all religion to promote donations activities among people and in this manner only, These measures can help us to solve the problem of scarcity of cadavers in medical colleges to some extent.

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