

## Knowledge of Islamic Religious Officials Toward Kidney Transplant and Donation

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DOI: 10.31080/ASMS.2020.05.0831

Received: November 21, 2020

Published: January 16, 2021

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### Abstract

**Background:** Kidney transplantation is the best therapeutic choice of patients with end stage renal disease as it improves quality of life and survival rates. However, it is limited by the scarcity of donors in part due to negative attitudes of muslims toward organ donation.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the knowledge of islamic religious officials toward organ donation and transplantation.

**Methods:** Cross-sectional study of 125 islamic religious officials. A questionnaire was provided to the study group, asking about their knowledge of religious attitudes and views toward kidney donation.

**Results:** In our study, 57% of religious officials refused to participate due to a lack of information on kidney transplantation. Most of the participants were in favor to kidney donation (88,9%) and believed that it was compatible with islamic judgments (94,4%), but none of them accepted the principle of brain-deceased donor.

**Conclusion:** It is clear that improving the knowledge of religious officials on organ donation is an important step in changing the cultural beliefs of muslim populations.

**Keywords:** Islam; Religious Officials; Kidney Donation

### Introduction

Kidney transplantation is the optimal treatment for end-stage renal disease. However, with the increasing demand for transplants and the limited supply of possible donors, waiting lists rise continuously. This shortfall is attributable to different medical, social and religious factors. The subject of organ transplantation has been highly contested within islam [1]. There is no consensus on this question as the Qur'an and Sunna, the divine revelation within Islam from which muslims look to for instruction, is silent on the issue of organ donation and transplant [1]. This may explain the negative attitudes of the general public toward organ donation [2].

The views held by islamic religious leaders are very important in guiding public attitudes and acceptance of organ donation including kidneys.

The aim of our study was to evaluate the knowledge of imams and islamic literature teachers about kidney transplantation,

their opinion about organ donation and the religious framework responsible of their position.

### Methods

We conducted a multicenter cross-sectional study between May and July 2019, recruiting islamic officials working in Agadir city.

The study subjects comprised randomly selected imams and islamic studies teachers working at high schools, islamic studies faculty, mosques and islamic scientific council.

A self-administered questionnaire was submitted to 125 islamic religious officials and was composed of three sections : socio-demographic data, knowledge og religious attitudes toward kidney donation and willingness to be a donnor and to participate to organ donation promotion campaigns.

The questionnaires were given out under the supervision of a researcher and participants could mark their opinion for each ex-

pression as "I agree", "I disagree", or "I have no idea".

Permission to perform this study was obtained from the Islamic Affairs Ministry, after providing the assurance that ethical principals would be followed. The data were evaluated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL, USA) 20.0 program.

**Results**

A total of 54 participants responded (43%) and 71 subjects (57%) refused to participate because of a lack of knowledge about kidney transplant and donation.

The mean age of the participants was 43,1 ± 1,16 years and 93% were man, 57% were imams and 43% were teachers of islamic studies.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in table 1.

Of the 54 participants, 88,9% were favorable to kidney dona-

tion and 68% thought that patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) should seek for the best therapeutic option despite the existence of alternative modalities of renal replacement therapy to sustain life such as dialysis.

Fifty one participants (94,4%) believed that organ donation was in keeping with islamic judgments and 92,6% considered it as a charity act.

All of respondants defined death as the cessation of cardiorespiratory function not as brain death, 83,3% cited the two models of donors : living and deceased donors and 57,4% believed that islam was favorable to cadaveric donation after cardiac arrest.

In our series, 81,8% of the participants were aware that the decision of organ donation was mandated by explicit first-person authorization from a potential donor for both living and deceased donation.

Forty nine participants (90,7%) refused to limit the role for families in authorizing cadaveric donation.

Beliefs about kidney and organ donation are shown in table 2.

Forty three respondants (79,6%) were willing to donate their organs after death, 85,1% were ready to give advice to people during Friday prayer regarding islamic point of view on organ donation and 79,6% accepted to participate to organ donation promotion campaigns. Most cited islamic arguments of organ donation by our participants were the Qur’anic verse (Qur’an 5 :32) : "If anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" and the Prophet Muhammad sayings (Hadiths) "whoever helps another will be granted help from Allah in the Hereafter".

The willingness of islamic religious officials regarding organ donation are shown in table 3.

**Discussion**

In the present study, we found that 57% of islamic religious officials were poorly informed regarding kidney transplantation and islamic judgment on kidney donation. Most of the respondants to

Characteristics	N (%)
Age (mean ± SD)	43,1 ± 1,16
Sex	
Male	50(93)
Female	4(7)
Education degree	
Bachelor degree	13(24)
Bachelor of islamic studies	30(56)
Doctorate in islamic studies	11(20)
Working status	
Imam	31(57)
Teacher of islamic studies	23(43)
Working area	
Mosque	30(56)
High school and Faculty of islamic studies	13(24)
Islamic scientific council	11(20)

**Table 1:** Participant characteristics.

Expressions	Opinions (N = 54)		
	Agree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	No idea N (%)
Kidney transplantation is not an absolute necessity as dialysis allows sustaining patients' life	1(2)	37(68)	16(30)
Dialysis does not meet all health needs of ESRD patients	43(80)	8(15)	3(5)
Kidney donation is harmful to donor's health	9(17)	36(66)	9(17)
Personal opinion in favor to kidney donation	48(88,9)	601,1)	-
Kidney donation is compatible with islam	51(94.4)	1(1.9)	2(3.7)
Kidney donation is an act of charity	50(92.5)	1(1,9)	3(5,6)
Donation can be performed from cadaveric donors	45(83.3)	9(16.7)	-
Death refers to cessation of cardiorespiratory function	54(100)	-	-
Islam allows organ donation from brain-deceased donors	-	54(100)	-
Islam allows cadaveric organ donation after cardiac arrest	31(57.4)	9(16,7)	14(25,9)
Informed consent of the donor is mandatory before donation	41(81.5)	10(18.5)	-
Limitation of the role for families in authorizing cadaveric donation	5(9,3)	49(90.7)	-

**Table 2:** Islamic religious officials' beliefs toward kidney and organ donation and transplant.

the survey were favorable to kidney donation (88,9%) and reported that organ donation was in keeping with islamic beliefs (94,4%).

However, none of them accepted organ donation after brain death and 57,41% believed that islam allowed cadaveric donation only after cardiac arrest. The majority (90,7%) required family authorization for cadaveric donation, 79,6% were willing to donate their own kidneys and organs after death and 85,1% accepted to give advice about kidney donation during Friday prayer.

These results reflects the debate among the islamic community on the compatibility of organ donation with islamic judgments, especially in relation to deceased- organ donation [3].

This dilemma is more pronounced in general public as it was reported in different studies that the main belief was that islam does not allow cadaveric donation [4-6].

It is well-known that religious judgments have a great impact on

organ donation consent of muslims and although many religious authorities have approved organ doantion, some aspects of the process remain incompatible with certain faiths [3].

The principle of "necessity overrules prohibition" is the main islamic argument cited in favor of organ donation, as it is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an "If anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" [7].

However, the reality that muslims hold negative views toward donation is due to some conflictual questions. First, the contingently permissible view that necessity overrules prohibition concerns cases where organ transplant is life-saving [3] and thus kidney transplantation may not be an absolute necessity as alternative modalities of renal replacement therapy do exist [3]. Second, muslims have a perception that they are not owners of their own body and have no right to give their organs away [8]. Third, the fatality concept that one should accept the fate that God chose for him [8] and finally, islamic contestations over " brain death " [9].

Many islamic ethico-legal verdicts on kidney and organ donation and transplantation have been issued from different parts of the muslim world and were in favor to organ donation as an act of charity and benevolence to other fellow humans which God loves and encourages provided the donation is freely done in response to an altruistic feeling of brotherhood and no harm is inflicted [10].

However, islamic jurists remain divided over whether a "brain dead" state signifies a dying or dead person [1].

Since organ donation and transplantation are not unequivocally addressed by the Qur'an and Sunnah, this leads to the interpretation of islamic teachings on decision-making process (ijtihad) for organ donation consent [3].

Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (IFA-OIC) and the Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Muslim World League (IFA-MWL) have diverging views on how to adequately define death. While the IFA-OIC considered "brain death" as a true biological death, the IFA-MWL judged that legal death occurred upon cardiopulmonary cessation [1].

This issue represents the major controversy with regard to organ donation among muslims and explains the fact that live donors remain the main source for kidney transplantation in Morocco and other muslim countries.

In the study of Uskun., *et al.* religious leaders reported that they were frequently consulted for advice on donation [11]. This finding indicates that religion is an important aspect of the decision-making process for individuals [3] and that the education of religious leaders is of vital importance in changing the cultural beliefs and practices of organ donation [11].

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a country performance in terms of organ donation is strongly correlated to its medical infrastructure but other factors are also important like culture and religion. Thus, health-care professionals and providers should be aware that educating religious leaders is essential to change attitudes of general public toward transplantation and donation.

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