

## The Ethics of Organ Transplantation: How Far Will We Go to Save a Life?

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The fundamental problem with organ transplantation is **the shortage of organs**. The fundamental ethical challenge of organ transplantation concerns the **procurement and allocation** of organs.

Some pressing ethical questions:

1. How concerned should we be about *extended criteria organs*—those from diseased patients or incarcerated people (HIV, hepatitis, alcoholic, etc.)
2. What is the definition of death? Whole brain or cardio-pulmonary?
3. Should minors be allowed to donate?
4. Should the mentally challenged be allowed to donate?
5. Should compensation be given to those who donate organs? By whom?
6. What are the limits of incentives to be given to those who elect to be organ donors on their driver's license?
7. Should people be able to sell or purchase organs independently of official channels?
8. Should we transplant porcine (pig) or simian (ape) organs into humans (xenotransplantation) if we can figure out how to do it safely?<sup>1</sup>
9. Should a patient's lifestyle and behavior affect their qualifications for transplant?
10. Is brain death an adequate measure of death? Is it scientific?
11. Should people with means be able to procure organs more quickly by influencing the waiting list, traveling to other regions with a shorter wait, and registering in multiple regions?
12. If it is critical to procure organs as quickly as possible after death, how do we prevent premature declaration of death?

### Ethical issues related to procurement and allocation

1. Taking organs from a healthy person
2. Issues with procurement

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Reiss, "Xenotransplantation and the Problem of Boundaries" *Ethics Journal of the American Medical Association* (September 2005) 7:9; <http://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/2005/09/pdf/oped2-0509.pdf>

3. Principles guiding policies regarding allocation

4. Definition and declaration of death

5. The commodification of the body

**Pastoral care for organ donors and recipients**