

Women, kin of deceased donors to get priority in organ transplant, says govt.

NOTTO has asked State governments to create permanent posts for transplant coordinators at hospitals that perform organ transplantation and consider training emergency responders and ambulance staff to identify potential deceased donors early

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Nursing students create Rangoli art to spread awareness during Organ Donation Month, organized by the State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (SOTTO) at Super Specialty Hospital Government Medical college, in Jammu on Thursday. | Photo Credit: ANI

To address gender imbalance among organ transplant recipients and encourage donations, the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) has issued a

10-point advisory stating that women patients and relatives of deceased donors awaiting organ transplants will get priority as beneficiaries.

In his recent letter to States and Union Territories, Anil Kumar, director of NOTTO, said that the objective of the inclusions is to make provisions for “additional points in the allocation criteria” for women patients in the waiting list to “address gender disparity”.

According to the Health Ministry, the existing allocation criteria for major organs and tissues — kidney, heart, liver, lungs, heart and cornea — have been prescribed by NOTTO for transparency and equity in the allocation system, giving preference to those whose requirement is more. The allocation criteria give priority according to the duration of the disease, period on waiting list, severity of illness, children, living donor now requiring transplant, and matching parameters such as blood group, age, size etc. for better outcome. The other factors include local utilisation of organs and geographical proximity of recipients.

NOTTO maintains a digital national registry of organ recipients and donors. Patients needing transplant can register through their hospital in the national registry.

Recently, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda said that since the launch of Aadhaar-based NOTTO online pledge website in 2023, more than 3.3 lakh citizens have pledged to donate their organs, marking a historic moment in public participation. “India achieved a milestone of performing over 18,900 organ transplants in 2024, the highest ever recorded in a single year, a significant leap from fewer than 5,000 transplants in 2013,” he had said.

In his latest communication, Dr. Kumar noted that all transplant hospitals and centres will have to mandatorily submit data of each donor and recipient of organs or tissues to a national registry maintained by NOTTO. Non-compliance would likely lead to legal action against such hospitals.

NOTTO has asked State governments to create permanent posts for transplant coordinators at hospitals that perform organ transplantation or retrieval. “It is advised that you develop facilities for organ and tissue retrieval in all trauma centres and register them as organ retrieval centres. Medical colleges have been encouraged to develop similar facilities in a phased manner,” the letter said, while calling for training emergency responders and ambulance staff to identify potential deceased donors early, particularly among victims of road traffic accidents and stroke patients.

Stressing the need to transform the organ donation and transplantation landscape in India, the letter has called for greater transparency, equity and dignity to the process and introduce measures to address longstanding challenges.

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