

LAUNCH OF ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK 2017 (1-8 April)

IKA proposes an Organ Donor Registry in line with the new HSE Consent Policy while acknowledging the importance of the UK's role in paediatric and specialist adult organ transplantation

In 2016 the HSE managed a total of 298 transplants, Mr. Mark Murphy (Chief Executive of the Irish Kidney Association) announced at the national launch of Organ Donor Awareness Week 2017. In addition to the 280 transplants which took place in Ireland last year, a further 11 paediatric organ transplants and 7 living donor transplants took place in the UK, organised by the HSE for Irish patients. The life-saving Organ Donor Awareness Week campaign, which will take place from 1st – 8th April, was officially launched by the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, T.D., at the Mansion House, Dublin 2 earlier today (28th March).

At the launch, Mr. Murphy said, “These patients have enjoyed the benefits of being able to access a larger pool of deceased donors in highly skilled UK programmes for paediatric liver, heart and lung transplants as well as specialised adult kidney programmes including paired exchange kidney transplants”.

In his speech, Mr. Murphy also proposed, “a way to increase the number of deceased organ donors is the establishment of an Organ Donor Registry. This registry should be in line with the HSE’s National Consent Policy. The Policy (see www.assisteddecisionmaking.ie) covers all areas of patient consent in the health system”.

When making comparisons between organ donation figures for the four years (2013-2016) with the previous four years (2009-2012), Mr. Murphy highlighted that while there were slightly fewer donors in the last four years, (307 versus 319), this was countered by more organ transplant operations taking place. He said that, “While constantly encouraging the public to consider organ donation is essential, there is evidence that improvements in skills and techniques can also help achieve more transplants.”

He commended the Mater Hospital for dramatic improvements in the number of lung and heart transplants carried out when comparing the period 2013-2016 with the period 2009-2012. There was a fourfold increase in lung transplants (from 31 to 134) and twice as many heart transplants (increasing from 30 to 60). There was a decrease of 47 in the number of deceased donor kidney transplants carried out in Beaumont Hospital when comparing the two time periods. However, that was more than compensated for with an increase of 61 in the number of living donor kidney transplants.

50 living donor kidney transplants was a record created in 2016 at Beaumont Hospital.

St. Vincent’s University Hospital has been consistent in its level of liver transplantation over the past eight years and it conducted 4 more liver transplants in the same four year period but with less donors.

The key focus of Organ Donor Awareness Week is to continue reminding the Irish public to have the important family discussion about their wishes concerning deceased organ donation and support the Irish Kidney Association by buying a 'forget-me-not' flower and other merchandise which will be available from volunteers around the country who will also be distributing organ donor cards.

The annual life-saving awareness campaign aims to highlight the ongoing and ever increasing demand for organ transplantation which relies on the public for organ donation. Its key message is that families need to discuss organ donation and keep the reminders of their willingness to donate visible by carrying the organ **donor card**, downloading the **Digital Donor Card** and permitting **Code 115** to be included on their **driver's license**.

For the second year, living kidney donor and RTÉ broadcaster Vivienne Traynor continues in her voluntary role as ambassador for Organ Donor Awareness Week which is organised by the Irish Kidney Association. Vivienne attended the national launch of Organ Donor Awareness Week 2017 and she features in radio advertising as well as on posters encouraging the public to support organ donation.

There are approximately 600 people in Ireland awaiting life-saving heart, lung, liver, kidney and pancreas transplants.

In 2016, 280 organs transplants were carried out in Ireland. 230 were as a result of the generosity of the families of 77 deceased donors and the remaining 50 were from living kidney donors.

St. Vincent's University Hospital conducted 58 liver transplants in 2016. The Mater Hospital conducted 35 lung transplants as well as 15 heart transplants in 2016. Beaumont Hospital carried out 172 kidney transplants including a record 50 from living donors.

There are 4,454 people in Ireland being treated for kidney failure, with 2,075 (47%) undergoing dialysis treatment and, thanks to the gift of organ donation, 2379 (53%) people are enjoying extended life from a kidney transplant.

Organ Donor Awareness Week also serves as a fundraising opportunity for the Irish Kidney Association. Throughout the Week (1st April – 8th April, 2017), the Association's volunteers will be out on the streets, and in shopping centres around the country, selling 'forget-me-not-flower' emblems, brooches, pens and shopping trolley discs. All proceeds will go towards the Irish Kidney Association's support for patients on dialysis and those patients fortunate enough to have received a kidney transplant. The Irish Kidney Association's charitable activities include the provision of a 13 double bedroom free accommodation facility for patients and their families in the grounds of Beaumont Hospital and holiday centres located in Tramore and Kerry, together with patient advocacy, advice, financial aid and rehabilitative, health promotion through sport and the provision of kidney patient information and education.

The Irish Kidney Association is the national organisation charged with the promotion and distribution of the organ donor card in Ireland, on behalf of Organ Donation Transplant Ireland.

Free information fact files, which accompany organ donor cards, are obtainable from the Irish Kidney Association and are available nationwide from pharmacies, GP surgeries and Citizen Information Offices etc.

Organ Donor Cards can also be obtained by phoning the Irish Kidney Association LoCall 1890 543639 or **Freetext the word DONOR to 50050**. Visit website www.ika.ie You can now download the IKA's new **digital donor card** by visiting www.donor.ie on your smartphone.

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