

FORUM:	The Special Conference
ISSUE:	Declining Human Organ Trafficking
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Introduction

Human organ trafficking is a lucrative global trade, holding a critical place with transnational organized crime groups due to high demand and relatively low rates of law enforcement. The trade predominantly involves the movement of people, instead of organs. It is estimated that the illegal organ trade generates approximately from USD 840 million to \$1.7 billion annually. Global Financial Integrity (GFI) estimates that 10% of all organ transplants are done through trafficked organs. The most illicitly trafficked organs are kidneys, with the World Health Organization (WHO) estimating that 10,000 kidneys are traded on the black market worldwide annually.



An example of a scar post organ transplant

Background

Due to a severe shortage of legally sourced organs around the world, organs have become a conventional commodity to be illicitly traded, with the desperation of recipients and vendors being a major cause. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the search for organs in previous years has intensified. This is due to an increase in kidney diseases and not enough available and adequate donors. Only 10% of the estimated need was met worldwide in 2005. With vendors seeking to oftentimes escape poverty or alleviate debt, whilst unless they receive a transplant, the recipients are facing death. Despite both parties breaking the law, neither one fits the image of a typical crime. Instead, it is the brokers and scouts that portray the characteristics of a criminal, striving to profit from the suffering of others.

Problems Raised

Poverty

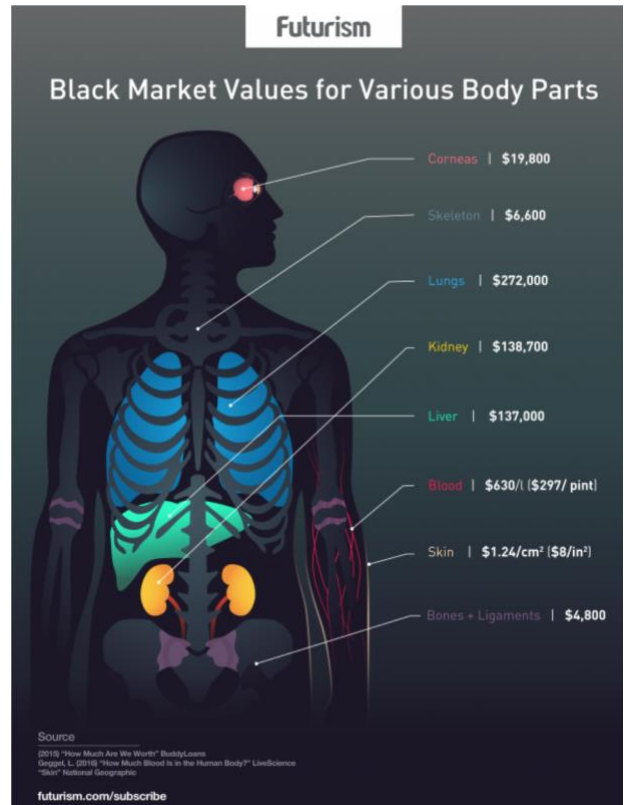


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Individuals living in lower economically developed countries (LEDCs) often times are unable to financially support their families (for example allowing their children to go to school); therefore, they decide to sell their organs such as kidneys. Although the buying price of organs can reach up to millions of USD, the donors only receive a small percentage of the revenue made. Most of the donors are bound to travel to cities, oftentimes far away, in order to get the organ transplant done. These different costs accumulate to even larger sums and leave the donors in greater poverty than prior to the operation. In addition to that, there are doctors that exploit the innocence and ignorance of the people, in order to get them involved in this business. As governments in these LEDCs often times have larger scaled issues to focus on, these illegal activities are rampant.

Health Risks

Donors are not taken care of, financially nor physically during their post operation period. As they oftentimes take risks in terms of undergoing the operation, they should require post operation care. Therefore, with that not being available to them, many donors suffer from diseases or malfunctions from their remaining organs. This is where education comes into play as well, as for most types of organs, individuals require one to live safely. If organs such as the heart are transplanted, with the donor having a lack of knowledge and agreeing either independently or even under duress, they have the risk of dying after or during the operation.



A visual representation of organ prices on the black market

International Actions

Establishment of a framework against organ commercialism

The European parliament has conducted a study in regards to organ trafficking and developed an ethical and legal framework against organ commercialism, consisting of varying guidelines and legal instruments that advocate for the prohibition of the commercialism of human body parts and the prevention of trafficking in human beings. This legal framework also includes the regulation of international standards and the adjustment of law enforcement. This framework was established in



cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Medical Association (WMA). Key values of this framework originate from a bioethical framework surrounding the issue of organ and tissue donation and transplantation from the 1950s. The values include respect for individuals, autonomy, human dignity, informed consent and voluntariness.

Creation of an Assessment Toolkit

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has created an assessment toolkit covering the “Trafficking in Persons for the purpose of Organ removal”. The different tools included case studies made up of the conduction of interviews with criminal justice practitioners, health insurance companies, employees of consulates and the travel industry etc. As well as that, the UNODC was screening procedures and evaluating possible donors. This allowed them to come to good practice responses and recommendations. These are known as prevention, legislation, protection, detection and cooperation. With the help of these different sectors, the UNODC was able to come to adequate solutions and responses to different situations in regards to organ transplantation and donation, effectively dealing with them.



Typical donors (red) and recipients (blue) worldwide

Key Players

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization is very involved in the issue of organ trafficking in persons, as they believe in the protection of vulnerable individuals who may be willing risk their health or even their lives when donating their organs, in hopes of making some money to provide for their families. In addition to that, global WHO consultations have been taking place for over a decade, since 2003. These consultations which started in Madrid group clinicians, social scientists, ethicists and government officials from 23 nations together, which unanimously agreed to progress into a further expert advisory panel. This panel discusses ways to further global transparency, with regard to long term health, psychological and socio-economic consequences for recipients and donors. The WHO has also created a global bulletin for further objectives and future goals.



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

As can be seen from the aforementioned efforts made by the UNODC to prevent and regulate organ trafficking, they are very involved in this issue. Their main goal is to have a manageable overview on this issue and use their assessment tool kits separated into different sections, in order to tackle the issue of organ trafficking in humans the most effectively. Furthermore, the UNODC believes in the collaboration with not only other organizations and nations but also individuals such as professionals and former victims, in order to apply the results from those case studies to future good practice responses and recommendations.

Possible Solutions

Legalizing the sale of human organs

In 1988 Iran became one of the first nations to legalize the sale of human organs, which has now, three decades later, resulted in Iran being one of the few nations without an organ shortage. As legally donated organs only meet approximately 10% of the global need, most people turn to



A child seen during an organ transplant

the black market. With this strategy of legalizing the organ donations and transplants, there will be no more inadequately trained surgeons which fail to follow up with donors after the operation, reducing the health risks and post operation care costs, leaving the donors in a both financially and physically healthier state. This system protects disadvantaged donors by ensuring that they are paid adequately as well as being taken care of; and as for the recipients, they will have a second chance at life.

Nations pursuing self-sufficiency

Examples such as the Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and transplant tourism which promote law enforcement and legal guidelines are effective in terms of regulating organ trade. The most effective solutions of this declaration include developing better systems of deceased organ donation as well as implementing the law that prohibits organ trafficking. These methods have been tested by nations such as India, Egypt and Pakistan and are annually being developed and changed to be made as effective as possible.

Glossary

Transplant commercialism

a policy or practice in which an organ is treated as a commodity, including by being bought or sold or used for material gain

Self sufficiency

needing no outside help in satisfying one's basic needs

Bioethical

the study of the ethical issues emerging from advances in biology and medicine



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