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Upfront

When Efficiency Saves Lives: *Well-run organizations, not bleeding hearts, are the key to increasing organ donations.*

By Alana Conner Snibbe

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When Efficiency Saves Lives

Well-run organizations, not bleeding hearts, are the key to increasing organ donations

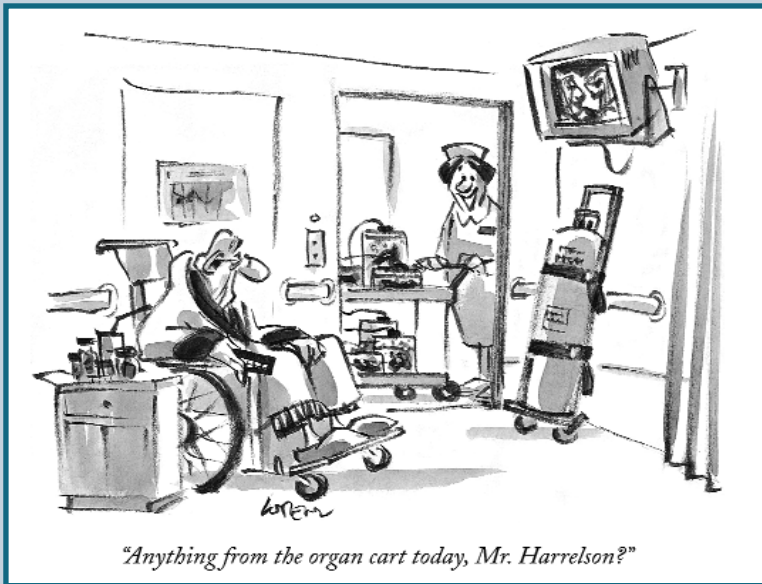
In convincing people to donate their recently deceased loved-ones' organs, successful organ procurement organizations (OPOs) could appeal to people's morals, values, or feelings. Or they might try offering financial incentives.

But actually, neither tactic would be the most effective way to procure organs, suggests sociologist Kieran

Healy of the University of Arizona and Australian National University. His research, published in the June 2004 issue of the *American Sociological Review*, instead indicates that OPOs that have succeeded in getting their own houses in order are the ones with higher rates of organ donation. His analyses of American OPOs show that those that spend more on administration and have more referral agreements with hospitals waste fewer organs – and save more lives.

To procure organs, OPOs must orchestrate a delicate, time-sensitive chain of events, from first finding out about organs' availability, to securing next of kin's consent, to extracting and storing the organs, to transporting them to transplant centers. Healy's research indicates that OPOs with more resources and greater reach into hospitals are better able to pull off this complex process.

"You would think that the role of the individual would be really important in organ donation, which takes place under terrible circumstances and usually only happens to people once," Healy says. His research demonstrates, however, that "it's not a question of motivating individuals, but of rationalizing institutions." –A.C.S.



"Anything from the organ cart today, Mr. Harrelson?"