

# Religious Perspectives

- All of the UK's major faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, support organ donation and transplantation. Many actively promote it.
- Within each religion there are different schools of thought on donation, but all accept that it is down to individual choice.
- NHS Blood and Transplant works closely with faith leaders, and with their support produces leaflets explaining more about religious perspectives on organ donation.
- Anyone who has doubts as to whether their religion or faith allows them to donate is encouraged to seek advice from their local religious leader.

## Buddhism

- There are no injunctions in Buddhism for or against organ donation.
- In some traditions, the moment of death is defined according to criteria that differ from those of modern Western medicine, and there are differing views as to the acceptability of organ transplantation.
- The needs and wishes of the dying person must not be compromised by the wish to save a life. Each decision will depend on individual circumstances.
- Central to Buddhism is a wish to relieve suffering and there may be circumstances where organ donation may be seen as an act of generosity. Where it is truly the wish of the dying person, it would be seen in that light.

## Christianity

- Throughout his life Jesus taught people to love one another. It seems that in keeping with that Christians consider organ donation as a genuine act of love and a way of following Jesus' example.
- Sacrifice and helping others are consistent themes in Christianity, which teaches the principle of seeking for others what you hope others would do for you.
- Christians are encouraged to help others in need. Discussing organ donation with family and friends is a responsible and thoughtful act.

## Hinduism

- There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. Daan is the original word in Sanskrit for donation, meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten Niyamas (virtuous acts) Daan comes third.
- Organ donation is an integral part of the Hindu way of life, as guided by the Vedas (the holy book of Hindu religion). That which sustains is accepted and promoted as Dharma (righteous living).

## Judaism

- Judaism encourages organ donation in order to save lives (*pikuach nefesh* - the obligation to save life in jeopardy). This principle may override the strong objections to unnecessary interference with the body after death.
- Judaism insists that honour and respect are due to the dead (*kavod hamet*). After donation, the avoidance of unnecessary further interference with the body, and the need for immediate interment, are of prime concern.
- Judaism insists that no organ may be removed from a donor until death, as defined in Jewish law, has definitely occurred.
- A competent Rabbinic authority should be consulted before consent is granted.

## Islam

- One of the basic aims of the Muslim faith is the saving of life. Based on Muslim law (Shariah), the Muslim Law Council of Great Britain supports organ donation and transplantation as a means of alleviating pain or saving life.
- The Council accepts that the medical profession is the proper authority to define death and that brain stem death constitutes end of life for the purpose of organ transplantation.
- Muslim scholars are unanimous in declaring that organ donation is an act of merit.
- These institutes all call upon Muslims to pledge the gift of life and donate: the Shariah Academy of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (representing all Muslim countries); the Grand Ulema Council of Saudi Arabia; the Iranian Religious Authority; and the Al Al-Azhard Academy of Egypt.
- Any Muslim who has doubts about whether they can donate should seek advice from their local Imam or scholar.

## Sikhism

- Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself.
- Sikhism stresses the importance of performing noble deeds and there are many examples of selfless giving and sacrifice in Sikh teachings by the ten Gurus (the historical teachers of Sikhism) and other Sikhs.
- Sikhs believe life after death is a continuous cycle of rebirth, but the physical body is not needed in this cycle – a person's soul is their real essence.

**You can find out more about organ donation and join the NHS Organ Donor Register by calling 0300 123 23 23 or visiting the NHSBT website [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)**