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SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT: LIMITED NUMBERS OF ORGAN DONORS DESPITE A LONG-TIME ACTION PROGRAMME. CURRENT FIGURES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Theresia Unger, Manfred Willinger, Ulrike Fischer
GÖG

E-mail: Theresia.Unger@goeg.at

The number of organ donors in Austria is traditionally high. In an international ranking comparing the numbers of transplanted organs per million people, Austria was number four after Spain, Croatia and the US in 2015, and held the top position in 2014. However, despite a long-time action programme since 2001 the intended increase to 30 (utilized) donors per million people has not been accomplished. This target has been achieved by most regions at some point, but with the exception of Carinthia not on a sustainable basis. The numbers of donor reports and utilized donors vary widely in regional terms. Nation-wide the number of donor reports is nearly twice the number of utilized donors. The documentation of the 25 local transplant coordinators (LTXB) shows the causes for this discrepancy with objections against organ procurement expressed by relatives and a negative assessment of donor organs by the transplantation centres being the most prominent ones. But there are also demographic reasons why keeping the numbers of organ donors high is like swimming against the current: since the beginning of the action programme the number of hospital deaths with diagnoses relevant for organ donation has been constantly decreasing in combination with a growing number of deceased patients being 75 years and older, an age group that is rarely considered for organ donation.

To draw conclusions for a further development of the action programme critical success factors of Carinthia as the national model of success and Spain as its international counterpart are highlighted:

- (1) improving communication skills and information of the public,
- (2) hospital-wide co-ordination of intensive care beds and staff training,
- (3) taking into account the admission of patients with impending death to the ICU to facilitate organ donation,
- (4) broader acceptance of expanded criteria and nonstandard risk donors and
- (5) promotion of DCD.