

November, 2008

ORGAN DONORS ON THE RISE DESPITE NATIONAL SETBACK

Organ transplants are on the rise in Rochdale, Bury, Oldham and Manchester despite a national setback over a change in donor consent.

Experts from the UK Organ Donation Taskforce have rejected plans to presume everyone consents to being an organ donor unless they opt out.

Since July 1, donor co-ordinators have been successfully trialling 'required referral' in three of Pennine Acute Trust's hospitals.

Required referral means donor coordinators work with bereaved families to provide information and allow families to make their own decision on giving consent.

Greg Bleakley, a donor transplant co-ordinator for the North West Region, believes at least four lives have been saved.

He said: "The results have been fabulous, for the first six months of the year before the trial we had four referrals and no successful donors.

"But from the trial being implemented on July 1 we've had 45 referrals and four successful organ donors from Pennine Acute hospitals, which is a really positive outcome.

"Staff have become used to asking families to consider organ and tissue donation as part of their normal duties.

"The families of all suitable patients are offered donation as a normal part of end of life care.

"We targeted Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester hospitals by working with consultants and the nursing staff."

Jane Monks, a donor transplant co-ordinator, insists raising awareness is the only way of improving organ donations.

She said: "Unless we know it was an expressed wish for a patient not to become an organ donor then families should be given the option of organ and tissue donation as a normal part of end of life care.

"The key is asking the question, and what has been shown over time is that the transplant co-ordinator can help families through this difficult time and allow them to make decisions that they feel comfortable with.

"The reason families used to decline was because they had never talked about organ donation before and indeed the way they have been approached by inexperienced hospital staff.

"There is a great deal to be done to raise awareness, to tackle fears and the anxieties families have about permitting organ donation.

"We could not have asked for more support from Pennine and the results so far are extremely encouraging."

ENDS