



**Organ and Tissue Donation:  
Health Professional Opinion Survey  
Topline Summary Report- February 2006**

**1.0 Introduction**

The Canadian Council for Donation and Transplantation (CCDT) with the use of a web-based survey tool, surveyed healthcare professionals who were members of ten specific health professional organizations on awareness, attitudes and behaviours related to organ and tissue donation, including the issue of donation after cardiocirculatory death. Healthcare professionals were able to access the survey online from November 28, 2005 until February 1, 2006 and upon completion there were a total of 720 completed (624) and partially (96) completed surveys.

**2.0 Participation**

Survey participation varied depending on the degree of willingness of the various health professional associations to access members on behalf of the CCDT.

Professional Organization	# of Respondents	# Accessed*	Response rate (%)	Comments on Accessibility
Canadian Association of Critical Care Nurses	236	500	47	Association included the survey on their website and through email blasts to members.
Canadian Critical Care Society	73	225	32	Association included the survey through an email blast to a limited list of their members. Two letters were also sent.
Canadian Bioethics Society	51	375	14	Association included the survey through email blasts to their members.
Canadian Association of Neuroscience Nurses	36	431	8	Association included the survey on their website and through email blasts to members.
Canadian Neurological Society	32	484	7	Association included the survey through an email blast to their members and experienced some technological challenges during the process.
Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians	103	1615	6	Association included the survey through an email blast to members but they were extremely delayed in their launch of the project and members only received one emailing.
Operating Room Nurses of Canada	70	1500	5	Association included the survey on their website and through email blasts.
Canadian Neurosurgical Society	5	189	3	Association was unable to participate due to technological challenges.
National Emergency Nurses Affiliation	32	1005	3	Association included the survey through an email blast to their members and experienced some technological challenges during the process.
Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society	10	2714	0.4	Association only willing to announce the survey in their newsletter to members.

\*Note: Numbers accessed are estimates

### 3.1 Awareness/Support/Behaviour

- 99% of healthcare professionals strongly (86%) or somewhat (13%) approve of organ and tissue donation.
- 68% of healthcare professionals have agreed to donate their organs and tissues after death and 16% have agreed to donating only specific organs or tissues after death
- 75% have signed an organ donor card and 11% are planning to sign
- 54% are aware of an organ and tissue registry in their province and 19% have registered
- The proportions who have decided to donate organs or tissues are:

	Decided to donate (%)	Decided NOT to donate (%)	Undecided (%)
Organs/Tissues	68	5	12
Specific Organ/Tissues	16	N/A	N/A

- 77% of healthcare professionals definitely (53%) and probably (24%) believe it is true that anyone at any age can become an organ and tissue donor
- 97% of healthcare professionals definitely (75%) and probably (22%) believe that doctors are committed to providing high quality care to dying patients and their families
- 83% of healthcare professionals definitely (57%) and probably (26%) do not think it is true that rich people are more likely to receive organs than poor people
- 88% of healthcare professionals definitely (63%) and probably (25%) do not think it is true that the process of organ and tissue donation could exploit minority groups
- 94% of healthcare professionals definitely (81%) and probably (13%) do not think it is true that doctors may prematurely declare someone dead for the purposes of organ or tissue donation
- 99% of healthcare professionals perceive a great need (95%) and some need (4%) for more organ and tissue donations in Canada

### 3.2 Family/Legal Considerations Regarding Donation

- 88% of healthcare professionals have discussed their decision to either donate or not donate with the person who would act on their behalf in an emergency
- 93% of healthcare professionals are very confident (67%) and somewhat confident (26%) that their intentions would be respected after death
- 69% believe that the wishes of the family regarding donation would be respected over those of a deceased individual's previous written intention
- 80% of healthcare professionals believe that the deceased individual's wishes should be respected
- 59% of healthcare professionals strongly (33%) support and somewhat (26%) support laws and regulations being changed in Canada so that organ and tissue donation occurs unless a person specifies otherwise; while 38% of healthcare professionals strongly (22%) oppose and (16%) somewhat oppose laws and regulations in Canada being changed in Canada.

### 3.3 Donation After Cardiocirculatory Death (DCD)

- 72% of healthcare professionals were very (31%) and somewhat (41%) familiar with donation after cardiocirculatory death prior to this survey

<b>How acceptable is organ and tissue donation in each of the following situations?</b>	Acceptable (7-5) %	Neutral (4) %	Not Acceptable (3-1) %
After neurological determination of death (brain death).	98	0	2
After cardiocirculatory death following withdrawal of life-support.	84	7	10
After cardiocirculatory death following unsuccessful attempts at resuscitation.	78	9	13

<b>How confident are you in the accuracy of the declaration of death in each of the following?</b>	Confident (7-5) %	Neutral (4) %	Not Confident (3-1) %
After neurological determination of death (brain death).	93	3	4
After cardiocirculatory death following withdrawal of life-support.	91	4	6
After cardiocirculatory death following unsuccessful attempts at resuscitation.	92	3	5

### 3.4 DCD: Consent and Interventions Before Death

<b>How acceptable is it for medical procedures to be performed BEFORE death to increase the likelihood of being able to successfully recover and transplant the patient's organs.</b>	Acceptable (7-5) %	Neutral (4) %	Not acceptable (3-1) %
Before there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation?	12	6	81
After there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation but BEFORE there has been specific consent to additional procedures?	35	13	52
AFTER patient and/or family consent to BOTH organ donation and to additional procedures?	90	4	7

<b>How acceptable is it for medications to be administered BEFORE death to help maintain a patient's organs for transplantation.</b>	Acceptable (7-5) %	Neutral (4) %	Not acceptable (3-1) %
Before there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation?	13	7	80
After there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation but BEFORE there has been specific consent to additional medications?	40	13	47
AFTER patient and/or family consent to BOTH organ donation and to additional procedures?	90	4	6

### 3.6 DCD: Consent and Interventions After Death

<b>How acceptable is it for procedures to be performed AFTER death to increase the likelihood of being able to successfully recover and transplant the patient's organs</b>	Acceptable (7-5) %	Neutral %	Not Acceptable (3-1) %
Before there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation?	10	6	84
After there has been patient and/or family consent to organ donation but BEFORE there has been specific consent to additional medications?	40	12	48
AFTER patient and/or family consent to BOTH organ donation and to additional procedures?	93	3	3

### 3.6 DCD: Hospital Procedures

- 74% of healthcare professionals believe it is very (45%) and somewhat (29%) acceptable for surgical procedures to retrieve organs begin immediately following declaration of death

### 3.7 DCD: Ethical Standards and Practices

<b>In the case of DCD how confident are you that ...</b>	Confident %	Don't know %	Not confident %
Strict standards will be put into place to guide all practices related to DCD and to ensure ethical conduct regarding DCD?	88	1	10
Health care professionals will follow these ethical standards or practices?	90	1	9
Health care professionals would be motivated by the best interests of the dying patients and not the possibility of organ donation?	87	1	12
That the process of providing optimal end-of-life care would not be affected by the organ and tissue donation process?	85	15	0
A patient's dignity will be recognized at the time of death when organ and/or tissue donation follows?	89	11	0

### **3.8 Conclusion**

- 86% of healthcare professionals are very (55%) and somewhat (31%) comfortable if Canadian hospitals decided to start a program offering DCD
- 51% of healthcare professionals are not very (37%) and not at all (14%) comfortable if Canadian hospitals decided to not offer DCD and 42% are very (14%) and somewhat (28%) comfortable

**The following list is comprised of three choices that healthcare professionals believe would be useful in diagnosing cardiocirculatory death:**

- 77% of healthcare professionals believe that a standardized medical definition of cardiocirculatory death would be useful
- 70% believe that a checklist of elements that constitute cardiocirculatory death would be useful
- 58% believe that a written policy, guideline or document would be useful
- 38% believe that seminars or training sessions would be useful
- 35% believe that a legislated medical definition of cardiocirculatory death would be useful
- 12% believe that a process to report the incidence of cardiocirculatory death would be useful

**The following list is comprised of healthcare professionals' three choices for best ways to increase understanding and support for DCD among healthcare professionals**

- 63% of healthcare professionals believe that lectures/presentations would be best
- 37% believe that there should be a hospital donation committee
- 32% believe there should be pocket reference cards
- 25% believe there should be a how-to booklet/guide
- 24% believe there should be a sample of DCD policies
- 24% believe there should be web-based learning tools
- 22% believe there should be an annual refresher course
- 20% believe there should be testimonials by either donor families or hospital staff
- 12% believe there should be a self-study booklet with a post-test component
- 9% believe there should be an E-mail list serve for updates/questions
- 9% believe there should be videotapes
- 8% believe there should be brochures
- 5% believe there should be newsletters
- 3% believe there should be on-line message boards