

To: All Clinical Leads – Organ Donation
Copy to all Specialist Nurse – Organ Donation & Specialist Requesters

24th March 2020

Dear friends and colleagues

We want to thank you for your commitment to organ donation and transplantation despite the pressing challenges. While COVID-19 rightly demands the full efforts of our NHS, we are heartened that you are still considering organ donation which in turn offers hope to those patients on the urgent list who may die without a transplant.

Last week we heard from colleagues in Spain, who usually facilitate around eight donors a day, that they are still managing to carry out one to two donations a day. Their experience is that organ donation is possible, albeit at a much lower level.

There are three things we need if we are to continue to offer lifesaving transplants to those in desperate need. These are:

1. Exclusion of COVID-19 in donors.

The completion of the COVID-19 SNOD Checklist is absolutely required and testing for COVID-19 must be completed before any potential donor can proceed. Latest requirements always available at <https://www.odt.nhs.uk/deceased-donation/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/>

2. Personal leadership and availability for communication by medical staff in the donor's ICU.

Every donation in the UK is now being progressed or stood down on a case by case basis. Donation is not occurring without ongoing local ICU leadership and discussion, often requiring direct input from Dr Ushiro-Lumb, NHSBT's virologist.

3. Please refer as normal.

- To free up ICU beds, on Monday we made the difficult decision to drop the upper age for both DBD (age 60) and DCD (age 50). These acceptance criteria may well change again, perhaps even altering on a region by region basis. The important point is that the SN-OD or Team Manager taking the referral will have the latest acceptance criteria.
- There is no longer any expectation that SNODs complete the PDA. This means that referral, and the information you give us by phone, is one of the only ways we have for decision-making and advising government and anxious transplant list patients.
- Capacity constraint is a reason for donation not to be explored further but please refer.

We know many SNOD/SRs are offering their services to their embedded or local ICU. As well as providing ICU nursing care, our specialist nurses have expert skills in communication and supporting bereaved families, even via the phone. We will be supporting them through this process, but we also ask you to reach out to them where possible.

There is no doubt that we are living through unprecedented times. We are however convinced that, as the Prime Minister said when he spoke to the nation, "We will beat the coronavirus and we will beat it together."

Thank you for all you are doing in this awful time.



Anthony J. Clarkson
Director of Organ and Tissue Donation
and Transplantation



Dr Dale Gardiner
National Clinical Lead for Organ Donation
dale.gardiner@nhsbt.nhs.uk