

What on Earth is an Organ Donation Fellow, and how do we get one?

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What are Organ Donation Fellows?

Organ Donation Fellows (ODF) are doctors with enough experience in critical care and anaesthesia to work on the 'registrar' or 'airway' rota on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), who have chosen to spend a year specialising in deceased organ donation. They are at least 5 years post-full registration with the GMC or similar.

The ODF role has been running for a number of years at Nottingham, with applicants either taking the year as an Out Of Programme (Experience) – OOP(E) opportunity, as a post CCT fellowship, or in a pause between core and specialty training.

The fellows spend 50% of their contracted hours covering the adult critical care rota, and the other 50% of their time supporting organ donation activity.

What do they even do, anyway?

When there is donor activity on the ICU, the ODF supports the SN(OD), CLOD and clinical team in many aspects of the deceased donor pathway – think of them as a specialised 'extra pair of hands'. This can involve:

- Communicating with families prior to, during and after approach for organ donation
- Donor optimisation
- Liaising with the police/medical examiner/coroner
- Neurological death testing and ancillary testing
- Withdrawal of life sustaining treatment and diagnosis of death
- Anaesthetic support for organ retrieval
- Support of colleagues with all of the above

And if there aren't any donors?

This depends upon the needs of your ICU and the interests and skill set of your ODF!

Aside from undertaking continuous professional development to support their specialist interest in organ donation and transplantation, previous and current ODFs have used this time to undertake donation related **research**, **quality improvement**, and multidisciplinary **education**. ODFs also support promotional activity, attend organ donation committees, and local St John awards.

Group	Benefit of the ODF role
Patients and families	An extra doctor on the unit with a special focus on their care and making things run smoothly
The ICU	Extra clinician available with specialist organ donation skills and knowledge, and an additional registrar to fill the on-call rota
CLOD	Designated registrar to support clinical and non-clinical organ donation activity
SN(OD)	Useful point of contact to support donor care
ODF	Unparalleled opportunity to develop subspecialty interest and non-clinical curriculum domains

Any other considerations?

The role is perhaps best suited to ICUs with higher levels of donation activity in order to allow enough exposure to develop specialist skills in a reasonable timeframe. The ODF will require clinical and educational supervision like any other non-trainee doctor on the ICU, and the CLOD is likely to be best placed to provide this leadership. Funding of the role will need to be provided, by the trust, the committee, both, or another source.

Also, the ODFs will absolutely make a big dent in any local SN(OD) biscuit supply. Sorry.



Conclusions

The ODF role provides a new route to development of a subspecialist interest for Intensive Care Medicine trainees, and allows unique opportunities for research, quality improvement, medical education, leadership and more.

The benefits to the SN(OD) and CLOD of a named registrar who is enthusiastic about organ donation are numerous, and the ICU benefits from both the ODF's organ donation specific skills and knowledge but also from having a slot on the on call rota reliably filled, potentially saving on locum costs.

The role works really well at Nottingham – maybe it could work for you too?