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Dear Colleagues

I'm sure you are all aware that during an organ retrieval, it is not uncommon for the NORS surgeon to find an unexpected and undiagnosed lesion/s in a donor organ/s. These lesions are often asymptomatic and as such they may not have ever been investigated. As part of safe donor characterisation and safe transplantation, it is of paramount importance to evaluate any abnormality with a biopsy for urgent processing and examination by a histopathologist.

Urgent biopsies can also be carried out to assess organ quality. When organs are retrieved from certain categories of donors, such as elderly patients, obese patients or patients with complex medical histories (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, alcohol abuse), it may be necessary to evaluate the quality of the specific organ.

Historically most NORS abdominal centres had access to 24/7 histopathology, either on their own site or by arrangement with another centre. In recent years, centres have increasingly become unable to provide this service, primarily due to a lack of funding to support an out-of-hours service. As a result, the current out-of-hours histopathology service for deceased organ donors is inconsistent, under-resourced and fragile and has been for some time.

A histopathology working group was set up to examine a range of options to find a solution. An information leaflet about the current histopathology service and proposed solution is available here <https://sway.office.com/xc8nJwh2tO4ujJ7T?ref=Link> for those seeking further information. Unfortunately, implementation is estimated to take 15 months before it will go live. I know this is disappointing, but we are working on an interim solution to bridge the gap and hopefully we will get an agreement soon.

Jackie Brander who is part of the interim working group will keep you informed as to the progress. I'm sorry this has been such a long process but I'm confident we will have a robust solution.

Best wishes



Professor Derek Manas

Medical Director Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation (OTDT)

NHS Blood and Transplant