

NHS BLOOD AND TRANSPLANT CARDIOTHORACIC ADVISORY GROUP

Unused Donor Hearts

Overall Picture for 2013

Reasons for non-use of hearts over the whole calendar 2013 are presented (table 5).

Very large numbers are turned down on the basis of function and history. For gratifyingly few are the reasons logistical, such as transport difficulties or centre already transplanting. Similarly, very few are not used because of damage.

Function, in particular, was the commonest reason given, with hearts from nearly 140 donors turned down on that basis alone.

Analysis for December 2013

A more detailed analysis was then done of actual donors in a calendar month.

In December 2013, there were 28 donors where hearts were offered but not used.

Retrieval teams attended in 20 instances (71%), and another three had a scout alone. So a very high figure of 80% of donors where the hearts were not used actually had formal cardiothoracic assessment in December.

Thus of the 8 where there is not a record of retrieval team attending, there was a scout in three. When size is often of importance, three of those with no retrieval team were >180cm tall, but two were attended by a scout. Two were still turned down on size!

Some decision making seems arbitrary. In 10 of the 20 donors where a team were present, the reasons for turn down were size, history or in 1 case age – all data which should have been known before the team was sent. In one case the reason was anatomy, but it is not clear if this was coronary disease. The other 9 were turned down on function.

This decision, made when the donor is in the operating room is generally for a specific recipient, and may not be general. Anecdotally, hearts in this setting have been successfully used by another centre, but often they are not offered.

In partial contrast to the lungs, we have no good functional data recorded nationally. There should be scope to collect data from PA catheters, as recorded on the scout project, to see if any good functioning hearts are still turned down.