

Eurotransplant: allocation and cross border exchange of donor organs

Author: Juliette van der Laan, Manager Communications

Organization

Eurotransplant is an international organ-exchange organization that covers Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia. Partners in the organ-exchange process include hospitals where organ donations take place, the national organ procurement organizations, transplant hospitals, tissue-typing laboratories and national competent authorities. The Eurotransplant region has a population of approx. 133,5 million people.

Eurotransplant was founded in 1967 by Prof. Jon J. van Rood and its office is based in Leiden, the Netherlands. The organizational structure is democratic, with an international Board of Management, an Assembly, a Council and a Management Team responsible for the day-to-day management of the organization. At every level it is possible for the national authorities, the national scientific transplant societies and the transplant programs in the centers to have an input in the policy and practice of the organization.

The Board of Management (the Board) is responsible for managing the foundation and supervising the day-to-day management. The President is Prof. Dr. med. Bruno Meiser. Eurotransplant employs about 100 people in a broad range of functions: allocation duty officers, medical doctors, (bio-)statisticians, software developers, administrators as well as experts in the field of data and quality management.

Benefits for patients

The international cooperation in Eurotransplant is of benefit for all patients in the eight member countries. The larger donor and recipient pool allows a better matching between the available donor organs and the patient on the waiting list, thereby improving the short and long-term outcome of transplantation including quality of life and survival of the recipients. Special patient groups like children, high urgent patients or highly immunized patients have a better chance of receiving a suitable donor organ in time. In case there is no suitable recipient in the donor country, organ loss can be prevented by making the organ available to patients in other Eurotransplant member countries.

Allocation

Eurotransplant plays a key role in the allocation and distribution of donor organs for transplantation and is a mediator between donor and recipient. The allocation system is based upon medical and ethical criteria. The allocation is independent of subjective factors, such as procurement and allocation organization, transplant center or society status. The system is fully reliable and it is ensured that with the same donor information and same waiting list information, the software generates an identical match list. With standardized working procedures and guidelines it is ensured that every step in the allocation process is documented and can be explained.



The Eurotransplant Allocation Center in Leiden is operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Here, the patient waiting lists for all member countries are managed and reported donor organs are matched and offered - based on rules and regulations of each member country - to transplant centers in the ET member countries. Eurotransplant was able to allocate more than 150,000 deceased donor organs in the 47 years since its foundation in 1967.

Allocation Development

Eurotransplant is actively engaged in developing recommendations and policies to further improve organ allocation and transplant outcomes. These are based on robust data collection and state-of-the-art scientific research. Eurotransplant has organ advisory committees wherein experts of the different member states work together on preparing and advising on the definition and implementation of new rules for allocation. Their work consists of monitoring specific allocation procedures within Eurotransplant and optimizing these allocation procedures. Recommendations for adaptation of allocation rules are forwarded to the Board for approval. When the Board agrees to a recommendation, it is sent to the National Competent Authorities of the Eurotransplant member countries for approval. Only after approval by the authorities, an adapted allocation rule will be implemented in the allocation process.

Cooperation saves lives

The Eurotransplant annual figures on transplantation and cross border exchange of donor organs clearly show that cooperation is of great benefit for patients. By 'pooling' donor organs, making use of a central waiting list and by continuously working together on the development of allocation rules, based upon evidence and expert opinion, the transplant community experiences the additional value from Eurotransplant. With great pleasure we invite you to visit our online statistics library and website for up-to-date figures on waiting list, donation and transplantation and more detailed information on our activities: www.eurotransplant.org