

Study finds affluent patients might have advantage for organ transplants

Registering with more than one organ transplant center appears to work for wealthy patients over those with the most medical need, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2015. Researchers studied the national database of organ donors from 2000 to 2013 and found that patients who simultaneously listed at more than one center had higher transplant rates; lower death rates while waiting, were wealthier and were more likely to be insured.

These findings suggest an advantage for wealthier patients who have the money for travel, temporary housing and other costs of multiple listing that are not covered by health insurance, said Raymond Givens, M.D., Ph.D., study lead author and advanced heart failure and transplant fellow at Columbia University Medical Center in New York. Patients with state-run Medicaid generally have lower income and may not have the option to list themselves at a center in a different state.

It's an effective approach to address long waiting times and the shortages of organs available for the increasing demand among transplant candidates. But it undermines a bedrock principle of organ transplantation ? which is that the sickest people should be transplanted first,? Givens said. ?From a policy perspective, there is a need to redesign the system of organ allocation to ensure fairer access.?

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