

Organ donation under spotlight

In "Ex-transplant chief: My doubts about new donor plans", News, last week) Professor Chris Rudge said changing the system of organ donation would undermine the concept of donation as a "gift" and might take away people's faith and trust in the system. Organ donation remains an act of altruism, whether someone registers as a donor under the current law or takes no action to remove themselves from the donor list, as outlined in the proposed system.

A poll commissioned by the BMA found that although two-thirds of the public support opt-out and want to donate some or all of their organs, only a third are on the donor register. A change in

the law would save lives by making it as easy as possible for those who want to donate organs to do so, while protecting the rights of those who want to opt out.

Despite the enormous improvements in the organ donation system, three people a day still die awaiting a transplant. We should all ensure that we make our wishes about organ donation known.
Dr John Chisholm, chairman BMA medical ethics committee

Give and take

The quotes that allude to the state having ownership of your organs risk polarising the debate on organ donation just as we are about to embark on a comprehensive consultation on the issue.

Under the suggested new system, you would have the right to opt out and your

family would still have the right to override this (as is the case under the Welsh opt-out system and in legislation under way in Scotland). This is why it is so important to talk about your wishes and to make sure your family knows them.

We recognise that for some people there are moral, religious or ethical reasons not to donate, but under our current system a decision on donating is just something people will get round to "at some point", according to NHS Blood and Transplant.

Whether you are in favour of the opt-out or not, we urge your readers to have their say in the public consultation the Department of Health is launching later this year.

Paddy Tabor, chief executive Kidney Care UK