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Session : Vitallink Symposium 2

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Session Title : Enhancing Public Awareness in Deceased Organ Donation and Transplantation

Assessment of public awareness using a standardized survey platform

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Living donor organ transplantation of Korea ranked second in the world in 2021. Surprisingly, 65% of kidney transplantation, 75% of liver transplantation were living donor transplantation. In contrast, the brain dead organ donation rate was 8.5 PMP, which has remained at the bottom of the world for many years. Only 4.7% of the population is registered for brain dead organ donation. As a natural result, 6.8 people die everyday waiting for brain dead organ transplantation. The importance of public awareness to increase the rate of brain dead organ donation in the public cannot be exaggerated. The education and promotion of brain dead organ donation to prospective medical personnel as well as the general public are very important in that they are likely to encounter potential brain dead people. Raising of public awareness is also very important, but it is considered more important to assess the effectiveness of public awareness in an appropriate method.

Background/Aims: To evaluate the awareness and knowledge on deceased organ donation through a systemic education, we developed educational contents with delivery pathways for pre-medical and medical students.

Methodology: On- and off-line self-learning aids materials on 7 topics on deceased organ donation were generated and posted on the Vitallink Academy YouTube site. Other materials selected from media and literature were also provided through the Vitallink homepage. Pre- and post-education questionnaires (32 and 15 questions, respectively) were developed using a web-based survey platform. The survey consisted of items related to awareness, knowledge, and attitude to deceased organ donation. These surveys were conducted before and immediately after the education process. The education was proceeded according to the following 3 steps (1) Group study sessions on selected topics, (2) Poster submission on the given topic by each group and excellent poster selection by the organizing committee, and (3) Excellent poster presentation and Q&A.

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Results: A total of 141 pre-medical students in the first grade at the premedical course at the Seoul National University College of Medicine participated in this program. Among those, 99 students completed the pre-and 86 students completed the post-education survey. Even though 96% of students had heard about deceased organ-tissue donation, only 2.1% said that they know well. Attitude analysis showed that only 4.0% of students completed deceased organ-tissue donation registration. 33.3% of students showed interest in the deceased organ-tissue donation-related issues. 24.2% of responders agreed that anyone who was diagnosed with brain death should donate. Students will agree to donate if their family member had registered (88.9%) or if the person had expressed wishes to donate while alive (63.6%). Most students (83.8%) said that courtesy for deceased donors is necessary or very necessary through funeral support services (35.4%), and the establishment of the memorial park or memorable monument (22.2%). 61.6% of the students accepted brain death as death.

Interest in deceased organ-tissue donation-related issues increased from 33.3%(before) to 84.9%(after) the education($P<0.001$). The proportion of students with a positive attitude toward organ-tissue donation was increased from 74.7% to 97.7% ($P<0.001$). Their attitude toward deceased donation evaluated by expressing willingness to organ-tissue donation also increased from 76.8%(before) to 96.5% after the education ($P<0.001$). The proportion of accepting brain death as a death increased from 61.6%(before) to 89.5%(after) ($P<0.001$). Moreover, 81.4% of students had changed in minds and planned to sign up for brain death organ donor card registration.

Conclusion: Among many avenues of improving public awareness of deceased organ and tissue donation, target-specific education could be the best way in increasing the proportion of family agreement and self-sufficiency in countries adopting the Opt-in system. In this study, significant improvements were observed in knowledge and awareness which is enough to bring changes in attitude when we applied our newly developed co-participatory education program to a group of premedical students. The online survey platform provided not only a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the education program, but also valuable information about the level of public awareness.