

Organ and Tissue Donation Strategy

Department of Health
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Department Health

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Message from the Minister of Health

I am pleased to present a strategy to improve organ and tissue donation services offered for New Brunswick residents.

Organ donation and transplantation can have a positive effect on the quality of life for those who receive transplants. By implementing this strategy, we can support the development of a culture of donation to ensure that each resident who wants to give the gift of life is assessed medically when the potential for donation is identified.

The organ and tissue donation programs, operated by our partners in the regional health authorities, are improving and becoming more sustainable. The focus of the strategy is to increase the number of residents who indicate an intention to become an organ and tissue donor.

This strategy serves to enhance a continued culture of donation. New Brunswickers demonstrate their generosity often and this strategy will support our programs to build on that spirit of giving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "V. Boudreau". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Hon. Victor Boudreau
Minister of Health

Executive Summary

The objective of this strategy is to maximize the number of organ and tissue donations within NB. Some initiatives that serve the intent of the *Organ and Tissue Donation Strategy Act* have been implemented and the strategy will continue to build on these efforts.

The Organ and Tissue Donation strategy in New Brunswick has a two-pronged primary focus on increasing both the number of organ and tissue donors and the number of residents who have indicated an intention to become an organ and tissue donor.

Organ and tissue donation is a multifaceted issue that can have an incredible effect on many lives. Through improved rates of organ and tissue donations, there will be a positive impact on the number of transplants performed on New Brunswick patients.

The Department of Health, Horizon Health Network and Vitalité Health Network have implemented a provincial advisory committee to work with the Organ and Tissue Donation Program to identify gaps in current service delivery and develop an evaluation and monitoring framework for the program to facilitate the tracking of program improvements and establish educational opportunities.

Maintaining the regulatory and accreditation standards for organ and tissue donation programs, in order to meet the mandate of providing safe organs and tissues for transplantation, requires dedicated time and attention. The NB Organ and Tissue Donation Program has continued to refine its operational requirements to support the enhancement of awareness activities that celebrate the successes of the program and recognize the generous gift provided by donors.

The number of NB residents indicating their intent to donate through the Medicare registration process continues to rise but it is important to recognize that only a very small portion of those residents who indicate a desire to become an organ and tissue donor will be determined medically suitable to donate.

Background

An organ donation program has existed in New Brunswick place since the early 1990s. The program operated through leadership at the Department of Health in collaboration with hospital staff throughout the province. As the regulatory environment expanded, and Health Canada inspections became mandatory, the department recognized the need to ensure continuous improvement of the program and it became apparent that the fragmentation of responsibility between the department and the regional health authorities failed to support the best service possible.

In 1994, the Saint John Regional Hospital created and funded an eye bank program which grew to provide processing for corneas recovered from donors in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as from New Brunswick. In 2000, The Moncton Hospital created and funded the Donald MacLellan Tissue Bank. The tissue programs merged in 2009 are inspected by Health Canada and accredited by the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) and American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB) respectively.

In 2012, it was proposed that in order to create efficiencies and promote sustainability, the programs be combined under a single reporting and accountability structure within one regional health authority (RHA). In 2013, after consultation with both RHAs it was determined that the required expertise available from both regions would be paired with administrative support led by one RHA. New Brunswick is the first and only province to combine the expertise and resources of a well-established tissue program with a provincial organ donation program in this manner.

Current State

In late 2013, the organ donation program was fully transitioned to Horizon Health Network. In 2014, a Medical Director was hired and the program is the final stages of hiring physician champions to support the enhancement of knowledge of all aspects of the program within all health facilities in NB.

Organ donation resource nurses have initiated the development of a network within the hospital facilities and the community to make it easier for NB residents to receive information about organ donation and efforts continue to streamline the process for residents to indicate their intention to become an organ and tissue donor.

Through consultation with Canadian Blood Services, the organ donation program and the Department of Health, coroners and funeral directors have been engaged in a new process to identify and refer potential tissue donors. New Brunswick is continually collaborating with Canadian Blood Services and the programs in the other Atlantic Provinces to strengthen the equitable allocation of available organs to suitable recipients.

An Atlantic Memorandum of Understanding for Organ Donation and Transplantation is in development. This document will demonstrate the collaborative nature of organ and tissue donation and transplantation services in the Atlantic Provinces.

Moving Forward

The health care community recognizes the importance of organ and tissue donation to improve and save the lives of patients for whom other alternatives are insufficient. Recent polls indicate that while a large percentage of the population supports organ donation, individuals tend to postpone a conversation about their wishes with their families. The result can be a lack of awareness about a person's wishes regarding organ and tissue donation.

To maximize effectiveness of the strategy the following steps will be undertaken:

- Stakeholder collaboration will continue to build on improved awareness and identification of organ and tissue donors through a network of health care providers, students and community leaders under the leadership of the NB Organ Program Medical Director;
- Public awareness will be strengthened using social media to provide relevant statistics about organ and tissue donation;
- Pilot programs, initiated in select NB facilities, will be evaluated, improved upon and may be expanded over the next two years. The aim is to support an increase in the number of referrals for organ and tissue donation through increasing the knowledge base and awareness throughout the healthcare system;
- The NB Advisory committee will continue to meet regularly to support the efforts of the program staff to enhance and improve organ and tissue donation in New Brunswick.

Outcomes

Efforts will be undertaken to collect data to enhance process and outcome indicators related to increasing awareness about organ and tissue donation processes. For this strategy, the tangible improved outcomes might include:

- Increase in the number of NB residents who have indicated their intent to become an organ and tissue donor;
- Increase in the number of referrals for organ and tissue donation;
- Increase in the number of referrals that progress to become organ and tissue donors;
- Decrease in the number of NB residents waiting for organ and tissue transplantation; and
- Decrease in morbidity rates of NB residents while waiting for organ and tissue transplantation.