Legalizing the Trade of Human Organs

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Organ Trade and the Global Shortage of Transplantable Organs

A wide range of different practices is covered by the expression “organ trade”. The majority of the people associated with it postulate that it is a situation in which an individual who needs a kidney purchases it from another who needs money in return (Ambagtsheer & Weimar, 2016). But in reality, there are many other possibilities that exist, for instance, a situation in which an individual pays now to others for using the rights over his/her body after death. This is possible only in those countries where earlier approval of the departed is obligatory for organ trade. Likewise, another situation is one in which relatives are paid for the organs of their loved one for giving consent to transplant rights (Singh, 2018). The study in hand is a cause-and-effect essay where kidney failure is one of the leading causes of people (causes), which promotes organ black markets (effects, for example, what comes about as a result).

In this modern age of advanced surgeries and medicines, approximately 4.2 million operations take place every year in the world for the purpose of saving human lives. There is no doubt in saying that organ transplantation has the ability to save innumerable lives, but the problem of the unavailability of human organs still does not meet the present needs (Sivoplyasova et al., 2015). The chronic shortage of organ donors is creating a global problem for the organ transplant medical community. In other words, the identified problem of this essay originated from the excess demand phenomenon of a market, which means the supply of organs for transplantation is lower than the demand for organs for transplantation. This excess demand occurrence causes the growth of black markets for the trade or sale of human organs. Leading think tanks of the medical industry are presently inspecting this spiky problem. In spite of fine-tuned and rigorous laws, the majority of the authorities are unable to cope with the problem of kidney trafficking or organ black markets.

The problem selected for this essay that needs to be solved is the increasing global demand for kidney transplantation and its impacts on the illegal trading of human organs. Kidney failure has turned into a more dominant disease during the last couple of decades. Two out of ten in America and four out of ten in the world suffer from chronic kidney diseases, which increase the kidney transplant demands. Kidney transplant is a surgical process in which the donor provides the kidney and it is placed into the recipient’s body (Sivoplyasova et al., 2015). According to the World Health Organization, kidney transplantation is leading in the list of transplants performed in 2018 by organ. These increasing demand trends cause a flood of candidates on waiting lists for organ transplantation.

Kidney Failure and the Economic Drivers of Illegal Markets

The essay problem under study (kidney failure and promotion of organ black markets) is caused by a variety of factors resulting in damage to the nephrons, which are recognized as the most important operational unit of this organ. In the majority of cases, kidney failure is caused by plenty of other associated health issues that have done everlasting harm to human kidneys over time. Damaged kidneys may not work as well as they should, which gradually leads to chronic kidney disease (Sivoplyasova et al., 2015). According to the medical literature, kidney failure can be divided into three different groups: acute, chronic and end-stage. End-stage kidney failure is treated by kidney transplantation (Ambagtsheer & Weimar, 2016). The most common cause of end-stage renal disease is diabetes. Another strand of literature states that high blood pressure is the most harmful cause in this regard. Some other prominent causes of this problem include urinary tract issues, genetic diseases such as polycystic kidney diseases, nephrotic syndrome and autoimmune diseases like IgA nephropathy and lupus.

Acute kidney injury is faced by the individual due to the kidneys suddenly stopping working. Some noticeable causes of this kidney failure are urinary tract problems, drug abuse, illegal drug use, heart attack, and not enough blood flowing to the kidneys. However, this type of problem is not permanent and can be cured without a transplant. Furthermore, the growing demand for kidney transplants is due to progressive poor health and obesity, which is due to poor eating habits (Sivoplyasova et al., 2015). These poor habits lead to the excess demand problem for kidney transplants around the world, which develops illegal trading or black markets. So, the above-mentioned health problems do not mean that an individual will have kidney failure someday. To keep the discussion concise, the increase in the waiting list for kidney transplants depends on the type of kidney failure.

The population of patients who have been diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure is rapidly growing, while, on the other hand, there is a massive decline in the number of available kidney donors, which is causing an upsurge in the average waiting time available for kidney transplantation (Ambagtsheer & Weimar, 2016). There are many studies available that state that due to the shortage of donated organs available, a significant number of people die from the transplant waiting lists. People sell their organs illegally in developing countries like India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Libya, etc. (Singh, 2018). There are different justifications available in the literature related to organ trade, for instance, exploitation by the salesperson or severe poverty. Another important effect of the growing list of transplant-waiting individuals is the increase in “transplant tourism”. It means those people who travel to make use of the donated kidneys. Human rights groups like Organs Watch opposed these practices and exposed the international groups involved in the illegal selling of human organs.

Medical, Ethical, and Social Harms of Organ Trafficking

Due to poor infection control and lower medical and surgical standards, the black markets of illegal kidney trading increase the complications for transplant recipients (TH, 2009). Another severe effect of the illegal market is that the donor does not get the necessary care required by an individual after the operation (Yoon, 2018). The operation is very unsafe for both the recipient and donor and often causes HIV or hepatitis in the receiver. Also, the majority of the money from the trade was taken by the middlemen, which left nothing for the donors (Aeder et al., 2016).

As stated earlier, the fundamental objective of this cause-and-effect essay is to examine the reasons for kidney failure, which escalates the individual waiting lists for transplantation and leads to the promotion of organ trading on black markets. This essay briefly points out the causes of kidney failure first and then sheds light on the increasing waiting lists for transplantation. After a keen evaluation of the medical literature and other reports, the essay concludes that the causes of high rates of kidney failures are due to progressive poor health, diabetes, and obesity, while the effect of this problem is the excess demand for kidney transplants. This excess demand for kidney transplants promotes the illegal trading of human organs around the world. The rest of this essay will propose some suitable actions with appropriate justifications to alleviate the understudied problem.

According to the latest report of the World Health Organization (WHO), on average, ten per cent of needs for organ transplantation are presently met all over the world. Researchers suggest that the best approach to meet the excess demands and to alleviate the problem of trading and existing black markets is to establish legal marketplaces as a minimum for kidney transplantation because it is a rapidly growing disease which promotes illegal human organ trade (Sivoplyasova et al., 2015). But another group of scholars claims that legalization of human organ trade will basically reposition the problem of prevailing markets and enlarge the trade. The WHO think tank also proposed some other solutions to increase the donor pool, for example: 1) strict implementation of laws to prohibit organ trafficking and trading, 2) encouragement of philanthropic living kidney donation, 3) development of a better structure for deceased organ donation, and 4) prevention of transplantation by treating diseases on time that lead to kidney failures like hepatitis, diabetes, and obesity.

National Self-Sufficiency and Reform of Organ Donation Systems

Every country must take responsibility to achieve the above-mentioned proposed goals or solutions and to meet its own necessities for kidney transplants by chasing self-sufficiency. Developed countries like the US and Australia have made remarkable progress during the last decade via the creation of the Organ and Tissue Authority. On the other hand, developing countries still have a lot of

work to do in order to alleviate the illegal trading of human organs. In addition, concentrating on the health of their own citizens and preventing them from becoming involved in the global market can also control illegal trading. Globally speaking, developed economies should help those countries suffering from extreme poverty because poverty is a major cause of human organ sales.

The problem addressed here is increasing trends of kidney failures (cause) around the world, which increase the transplantation waiting lists and further encourage illegal practices in the shape of organ black markets (effects). Plenty of solutions have been proposed by researchers in order to cope with this problem; for instance, those schemes should be regulated in the country, which includes reimbursement for removing potential disincentives to organ donations and ensuring the donor's safety. To facilitate these critical areas, international transplant and nephrology societies, the World Health Organization and National Kidney Foundation-type organizations can play a key role in facilitating initiatives. Furthermore, the health care code of conduct should clearly be defined for the professional health care facilities for the donors. The surgeons and physicians should take responsibility to make sure that obtained transplanted kidneys meet the highest ethical standards.

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