The Donation Conversation as a Process

The critical aspect of a Family Donation Conversation is recognizing that it is a PROCESS and not an event.

5 Phases of the Family Donation Conversation Process

1. Timely referral of potential donor to OPO (before brain death testing begins and withdrawal decisions are made)
2. OPO conducts onsite fact and information gathering
3. OPO and hospital teams coordinate to provide support and meet the family’s needs
4. Hospital team continues to help the family understand brain death and withdrawal decisions
5. Family readiness assessment is done by the OPO and hospital team
6. Timing of the donation conversation is determined based on family readiness, which could be before BD determination
7. Physician gives the family a sense of Brain Death or guides the withdrawal decision (provides family grief support)
8. The donation conversation is led by the OPO; questions are encouraged, inspiration provided
9. Informed, proactive, enduring decision is made by the family
10. If yes to donation, gratitude is shared and next steps preparation begins; if not to donation, explore further to ensure proactive, informed decision then share gratitude for consideration
11. OPO plans for closure
12. Final family needs are assessed and met
13. Aftercare provided to the family by OPO

Family Readiness Assessment for Donation Conversation

Definition of Family Readiness
An assessment of a family’s understanding in which it has been determined that the family:
- Understands that their loved one has died, or that they have suffered an irreversible injury for which there is no hope of meaningful survival, and
- Ideally, they have been prepared by the best means possible to participate in conversation to make a proactive, informed, enduring donation decision.

Triggers Indicating Time for Family Donation Conversation

For additional information, please visit:
www.organdonationalliance.org/insights/alliance-spotlight-series/

Helpful Resources:
A special thanks to Patti Mulvania, RN, BSN, CPTC, Senior Faculty at Gift of Life Institute and Laura Siminoff, PhD, Professor of Public Health at the College of Public Health of Temple University for their contributions to this publication.

For a more detailed overview, review a recent presentation featured in The Alliance’s Advancement Learning Series Portfolio on: "The Donation Conversation as a Process: How Research and Experience can be Used to Develop Evidence-Based Standards of Practice" hosted on January 10, 2023.

Donation Conversation Goals
1. A Well-Informed Decision ensures that the family is aware of the powerful significance of the decision they are making; this requires sensitivity and careful attention to protecting the family from feeling pressured in any way.
2. A Proactive Decision is characterized as a decision that the family and the donor would have made on an ordinary day, at a time when they had full knowledge of the impact and meaning of the decision, that is consistent with their values and beliefs.
3. An Enduring Decision is one that the family can look back on in the years to come and feel confident that it was the right decision for them, and one that they would make again.

For additional references & resources; or to learn more, please visit: www.organdonationalliance.org/insights/alliance-spotlight-series/

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