

New Rules Notified for Organ Transplant Allocation

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Organ Transplant Latest News

- The Union Government has revised the organ transplant allocation policy, giving priority to women patients and relatives of deceased donors to address gender disparity and boost donations.

Introduction

- The National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (**NOTTO**) has issued a new 10-point advisory aimed at improving transparency, equity, and inclusivity in India's organ transplant system.
- A key highlight of the revised allocation criteria is the provision of priority status to **women patients** and **relatives of deceased donors** awaiting organ transplants.
- This landmark decision is part of a broader effort to address **gender imbalances** in organ transplant recipients and to encourage more citizens to pledge organ donation.

Organ Transplant Allocation in India

- Organ allocation in India is governed by guidelines formulated by NOTTO under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The allocation criteria already prioritise recipients based on:
 - **Medical urgency** (severity of illness)
 - **Duration of wait time** on the transplant list
 - **Matching parameters** such as blood group, organ size, and age
 - **Special cases**, such as children or patients whose living donor had previously donated an organ but now requires a transplant themselves
 - **Geographical proximity** for optimal organ viability
- The allocation system ensures that organs are distributed fairly and transparently, with the goal of achieving the best medical outcomes.

New Priority Criteria for Women and Donor Families

- The revised guidelines introduce “**additional points in allocation criteria**” for:
 - **Women patients** on the national waiting list
 - **Immediate relatives of deceased donors**
- **Rationale**
 - **Gender Disparity:** Historically, women have had lower representation among organ transplant recipients, often due to socio-economic and cultural factors that lead to delayed diagnosis or treatment.
 - **Encouraging Donations:** By offering priority to donor families, the policy aims to increase deceased organ donations, addressing the chronic shortage of organs in India.

National Registry and Data Compliance

- NOTTO maintains a **digital national registry** of both donors and recipients. Hospitals performing transplants must register patients through this system.
- **Key compliance measures:**
 - All transplant centres must **mandatorily submit data** for each donor and recipient to the national registry.
 - Non-compliance could result in **legal action** against hospitals.

Organ Donation Milestones in India

- India has seen a remarkable growth in organ donation and transplant numbers:
 - **2023:** Launch of Aadhaar-based NOTTO online pledge portal.
 - **2024:** Over **3.3 lakh citizens pledged** to donate their organs.
 - **2024:** A record **18,900 organ transplants** were performed, a sharp rise from fewer than 5,000 in 2013.
- These figures indicate growing public participation and improved medical infrastructure in the organ transplantation ecosystem.

Strengthening Transplant Infrastructure

- The advisory also calls for:
 - **Permanent posts for transplant coordinators** in hospitals performing organ retrieval and transplantation.
 - Development of **organ retrieval centres** in all trauma centres and registration of these facilities with NOTTO.
 - Encouraging **medical colleges** to develop retrieval facilities in a phased manner.
 - **Training emergency responders and ambulance staff** to identify potential deceased donors early, especially in cases of road accidents or strokes.

Broader Impact and Future Outlook

- The new allocation rules mark a significant shift in India's approach to organ transplantation by integrating social equity considerations into medical prioritisation.
- By tackling gender disparity and recognising the contribution of donor families, NOTTO aims to create a more balanced, transparent, and humane system.
- In the long term, these changes are expected to:
 - **Increase deceased organ donations**
 - **Improve gender balance** in transplants
 - **Enhance trust** in the allocation process
 - **Strengthen national transplant capacity**

Source: TH

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