

## WELLNESS WATCH



### Giving The Gift Of Life At The End Of Life

(NAPSA)—Between 1990 and 1999, the number of transplants performed in the U.S. nearly doubled. During that same time, the number of organ donors rose 59 percent, but the need for transplantable organs rose fivefold. Today, there are more than 75,000 men, women and children on the national organ transplantation waiting list.

Alan Langnas, D.O., an osteopathic physician who is a professor of surgery and chief of the Section of Transplantation at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, believes there are two reasons for this.

“On one hand,” he says, “medical advances have increased the success rate of using organ transplantation to treat a number of life-threatening diseases. However, there hasn’t been a corresponding increase in the efforts by doctors and their patients to become more informed about the need for donated organs, or to openly address the issues and concerns patients may have about donating.”

When considering donation, many people think only about the major organs, such as the heart, liver or kidneys. However, there are more than 25 different transplantable organs and tissues, including:

- corneas for preserving or restoring sight;
- bone marrow for treating certain types of leukemia and sickle cell anemia;
- skin grafts for burn, accident and disease victims;
- bone for reconstructing lost, destroyed or deformed limbs or facial features;
- heart valves for correcting



**For potential organ donors, it's important to discuss the matter with family members.**

birth defects; and

- tendons, ligaments and cartilage for correcting congenital defects or traumatic deformities.

In fact, according to the American Osteopathic Association, each donor can potentially save and enhance up to 50 lives and take eight people off the national organ donor waiting list.

“Americans’ attitudes about organ and tissue donation are changing, but we still have a long way to go,” says Wayne J. Reynolds, D.O., an osteopathic family physician with the Hayes Medical Center in Hayes, VA.

To express your wishes to become a donor, indicate your intent to donate on your driver’s license and carry an organ donor card with you at all times. Most importantly, be sure your family and loved ones are aware of your intent to be a donor.

D.O.s are fully licensed physicians able to prescribe medication and perform surgery. They treat people, not just symptoms.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association’s Web site at [www.aoa-net.org](http://www.aoa-net.org) or call toll-free 1-800-621-1773.

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*Editor's Note: This is the second article in a three-part series on end-of-life issues.*