

Palliative Care: Communication and the Patient Experience

Resources - Video 3

Kim Bowman:

Trillium Gift of Life Network, or TGLN as we call it, is the organ and tissue donation agency for the province of Ontario. We've been operational since 2001, and we report to the Ministry of Health and Longterm Care. TGLN is the central body responsible for, amongst other things, consultation, screening, allocation, and recovery of organs, and we also work in collaboration with the tissue banks of the province to assess tissues for potential for donation and transplant. How donation works in Ontario is that hospitals across the province, following the provincial legislation, will call Trillium Gift of Life Network, and healthcare providers will speak to us if they have somebody who's at high risk of imminent death, or they'll call to report a death in their unit.

Organ donation can only happen in circumstances where a patient is ventilated. Our organ donors happen after pronouncement of neurological or brain death, or after cardio-respiratory death, and that's after a family and the bedside team has discussed a very grave prognosis and a mutual decision occurs to withdraw life support. Tissue donation, on the other hand, isn't restricted to circumstances where somebody is ventilated. It can happen in many more places in a hospital, so for instance, somebody who is a patient in the palliative care unit may have the opportunity to be a tissue donor.

Donation is actually supported by most religions, and for a donor family, donation is the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy for their loved one, or give them the ability to carry out a documented wish or a discussion that have - may previously have occurred. At end of life there are a lot of decisions that have to happen, and what we find is that donation is a decision that's very meaningful to a family. I would say for healthcare providers that it's extremely important to call Trillium Gift of Life Network to report a death or to refer somebody who may be at high risk of imminent death. And for themselves, to think about registering to be a donor. It's a very fast process; it can be done online. And the conversations that you have with your own families definitely give hope to those people waiting.

At Trillium Gift of Life Network we feel very strongly that donation should be part of any good end-of-life care offered by the care team.