



SURVEY ON KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS, AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS BODY DONATION IN PARAMEDICAL HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA.

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ABSTRACT **Introduction:** Cadaveric dissection remains the cornerstone of anatomy, providing a comprehensive understanding of human body. Body donation is defined as conscious and voluntary decision to donate one's entire body after death for medical education and research. **Aim And Objective:** To assess knowledge, awareness, and attitude regarding body donation among the paramedical healthcare professionals. To evaluate their awareness of body donation processes and associated ethical and legal aspects. **Methodology:** Cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey conducted at tertiary care hospital. Total responses collected for the survey were 211 through a 21-question form. **Results:** 91.1% knew about body donation for medical education but, only 26.5% showed willingness to donate which was significantly decreased. Only 59.2% knew about legal procedure and 15.6% understood the registration process. Major barrier being religious beliefs (17%), family opposition (19.8%) and dignity concerns (13.27%). **Conclusion:** Despite positive attitudes, knowledge gaps and cultural barriers hinder body donation. Targeted awareness, policy interventions, and advocacy by medical professionals can enhance donation rates for education and research.

KEYWORDS : Body donation, Cadavers, Advocacy, Ethics.

INTRODUCTION:

Anatomy is one of the basic and core subject of medical education which helps medical students to understand the human body [1]. Cadaveric dissection being a fundamental part of teaching and research is irreplaceable [2]. It is difficult for medical students to gain practical knowledge about the human body without dissection of cadavers [3].

Due to the accelerated development of new medical colleges, the demand for cadavers has increased tremendously [4]. To meet this demand, people should be informed about body donation. Body Donation is an informed and voluntary decision to donate one's body following death for teaching and research purposes [1].

The murder act of 1752 was the first legal approval to use the bodies of executed criminals for dissection [5]. In India, the legal procedure for procuring cadavers for education and research was amended as the Bombay Anatomy Act, 1949 [6]. Before this, unclaimed bodies were the main source of cadavers [7]. Now in this modern era, Anatomists believe that cadavers should only be received from donors who have legally declared to donate after their death [1].

The first willing cadaveric donation in India was in 1956 when the deceased body of Shri Pandurang Shridar Apte was donated to B.J. Medical College, Pune [8]. Since then, voluntary donation has been the main source of cadavers in medical colleges [7].

There are many obstacles to this voluntary decision to donate one's body. These include the lack of awareness among the population, traditional customs favoring burial or cremation and concerns regarding the dignity of the deceased [9].

In India, there is limited awareness and willingness among the general population as well as healthcare professionals to donate their bodies for medical education and research purposes.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE:

To assess knowledge, awareness, and attitude regarding body donation among the paramedical healthcare professionals in MGM Medical College, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

To understand their attitudes towards body donation and willingness to

pledge their bodies and evaluate their awareness of body donation processes and associated ethical and legal aspects.

METHODOLOGY:

Cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey was conducted at MGM Medical College, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in February 2025 following the approval from MGMECRHS. The study was conducted as per ICH-GCP guidelines.

Participants were chosen on the basis of inclusion criteria:

1. Age more than 18 years and less than 85 years.
2. Paramedical healthcare professionals like nursing staff, physiotherapists, laboratory technicians, and other allied health professionals.
3. Willing to provide consent to fill up the questionnaire form.

Participants less than 18 years and more than 85 years were excluded. Also, the Administrative and non-medical staff were excluded from this study.

Following data was recorded through a validated and structured questionnaire:

- Demographic information
- Knowledge about body donation
- Awareness and willingness to donate
- Attitude towards body donation

For the calculation of the sample size, $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.90 was taken and prevalence of awareness in healthcare professionals presumed about 77% from previous studies. Using PS software sample size was found to be 193.

Total responses collected for the survey were 211.

RESULT:

The collected data was analyzed and formulated into a result and presented. After analysis of questionnaire, among 211 participants we found that 91.9% knew about body donation [Figure 1]. 93.8% knew that there is a difference between cadaveric and organ donation. 59.2% knew about the legal and ethical aspects of body donation but only 15.6% knew about the registration process which is a significant fall [Figure 2]. Only 26.5% of the study population was willing to donate

their body. Among 73.4% unwilling to donate their body, 41.8% were unaware about body donation, 19.8% had family opposition, 17% had religious beliefs and cultural traditional as barriers and 13.27% had dignity concerns that whether the deceased will be treated with respect or not [Figure 3]. 65.4% strongly agreed that cadaveric donation helps medical students to learn better. 46.9% stated that they would encourage their family and friends to consider body donation. 92.4% wanted the government and medical colleges to run awareness programme to promote cadaveric donation.

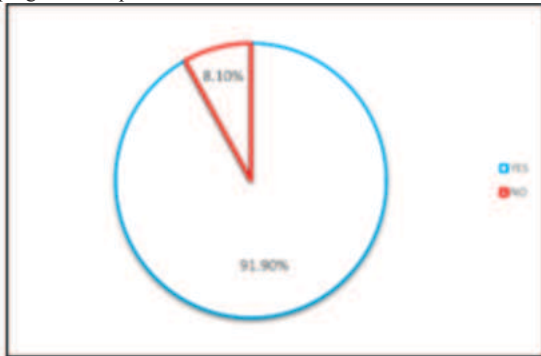


Figure 1: Graphical representation of participants knowledge on body donation



Figure 2: Graphical representation of participants knowing about registration process of body donation

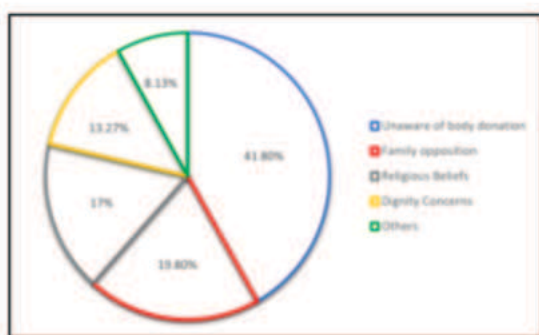


Figure 3: Graphical representation of reasons and barriers causing unwillingness towards body donation

DISCUSSION:

Voluntary and willing donation of one's whole body for medical education is the price less gift to the mankind [10]. The study revealed that a significant proportion of paramedical healthcare professionals have an awareness gap regarding body donation, particularly in the legal and procedural aspects. Most of the participants showed that they understand body donation and its significance but, due to less exposure to the actual process of donation causes decrease in rate to donate (Ghosh, 2015) [11]. Mass and social media is providing the knowledge regarding body donation to the population but, there is scarcity for structured educational programmes (Ball & Dillingham, 2020) [12].

Many attempts to spread awareness regarding body donation has been carried out by Institutions but, their efforts were not enough. The government along with the medical institutions should conduct a proactive and coordinated campaign (Kumar et al., 2016) [13]. The significant barrier for body donation came out to be the religious and cultural beliefs, similar trend was observed in the study by Rokade & Gaikwad, 2012 [14]. In the study by da Rocha et al., 2013 [15] discomfort with dissection, family opposition and dignity concerns came out to provide resistance towards body donation. Albrecht et al., 2014 [16] have observed that including the topic of body donation into medical and paramedical curricula can help in spreading awareness. Voluntary body donation by medical healthcare professionals can lead to normalization of the practice in medical field. To ease the public concerns, proper policies and ethical treatment of cadavers can play an important role [11]. This study had two main limitations being, Self-Reported Data Bias and Religious Influence Complexity. Paramedical healthcare professionals are a vital part of medical field. They play a key role while providing healthcare services along with the medical professionals. But, without each other, none can suffice. So, as to have a better future, paramedical healthcare workers should be aware and willing to donate their bodies for medical education and research, ensuring voluntary decision, informed consent and cultural sensitivity.

CONCLUSION:

Though, majority of the paramedical healthcare professionals have positive attitude towards body donation, the study revealed that there is a substantial gap in the knowledge and the religious barriers that hinders the willingness to donate. Improper knowledge regarding the legal and ethical aspect creates confusion and reluctance. Dignity concerns and family opposition remain to be the major deterrents. To meet the rising demand, a composite approach is necessary. Targeted awareness programmes, media, institutional outreaches and policies will help in building a strong trust and clarity towards body donation.

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