NOCA National Office of Clinical Audit

IPODA Irish Potential Organ Donor Audit

IRISH POTENTIAL ORGAN DONOR AUDIT SUMMARY REPORT 2023-2024

The Irish Potential Organ Donor Audit (IPODA) looks at the care of people who may be able to donate their organs after death. It helps us understand how potential organ donors are identified, referred and cared for, and where improvements could be made. In 2023 and 2024, IPODA collected information from nine intensive care units (ICUs) in six hospitals in Ireland.

WHAT IS CLINICAL AUDIT?

The National Office of Clinical Audit (NOCA) was set up in 2012 to support national clinical audits of healthcare in Ireland. National clinical audits regularly look at different areas of care to see how well services are working and where improvements can be made.



National clinical audits look at:

- **how healthcare services are organised**
- **how care is provided**
- **the outcomes experienced by patients**

NOCA works with healthcare providers to help them understand and use this information so they can learn from it and improve patient care over time.

IPODA AT A GLANCE - 2023 & 2024



1,891
People died in participating ICUs



246
met the criteria to be considered for organ donation



141
families assented* to organ donation



119
people became an organ donor

*This means the family agreed that organ donation could proceed.

TONY AND KYLE GAVIGAN'S STORY



Kyle Omar Gavigan passed away in 1996 aged 12¾ and donated his organs. Tony Gavigan, his dad, tells us about that experience and about the young man Kyle was. "The reason the ¾ must be included in all this is that he'd done so much in those nine months of that year. He played tennis, and he won seven or eight trophies in that short time. He was invited to play at an excellent tennis club; he was a champion. Kyle was in the sixth class at National School at that time, and he was the goalie for the school team too". Within months of Kyle's passing, Tony developed kidney failure, having not been ill before. He started dialysis almost immediately after his diagnosis and thankfully only had to wait a year for another family to make the grave decision, which his family had made a year before, to donate a loved one's organs. Tony has now lived with his gifted kidney for 27 years.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ MORE ON PAGES 15 AND 16 IN THE FULL REPORT.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS 2023-2024

Total deaths
1,891

2024	2023
978	913

Percentage of organ donors included in IPODA.

2024	2023
65%	68%

The referral rate is lower in the donation after circulatory death (DCD*) eligible group.

** Organ donation that may take place after a person's heart has permanently stopped*

2024	2023
74%	68%

Almost all families of people eligible for donation after brain death (DBD) were approached about organ donation.

2024	2023
97%	98%

31% of people who died had a neurological cause of death.

2024	2023
32% (313)	29% (265)

Two-thirds (232) of all neurological deaths were caused by haemorrhagic stroke or brain damage caused by a lack of oxygen.*

* A neurological condition affects the brain or nervous system.

2024	2023
66% (119/181)	69% (113/165)

Families were less likely to be approached about organ donation in DCD cases.

2024	2023
64%	59%

All DCD donors had to reach asystole* for consideration by transplant surgeons within 60 minutes.

60

** Asystole is a form of cardiac arrest in which the heart shows no electrical activity.*

"The rate of organ donation in Ireland after circulatory death needs to be brought in line with best practice in the UK. This will save lives and will probably need a review of the criteria used in these situations."

J. Burns - Patient and Public Interest Representative

More than one in three people who died from a neurological cause met the criteria to be considered for organ donation.

2024	2023
39% (122)	47% (124)

Almost all people eligible for donation after brain death (DBD*) were referred to specialist organ donation staff.

• Organ donation that may take place after a person has been confirmed as brain dead.

2024	2023
96%	97%

The assent rate may be declining, and reasons for this require close monitoring and region variability analysis.

2024	2023
66%	74%

Specialist staff made a difference. Families were more likely to assent to organ donation when specialist organ donation staff were present during the conversation.

2024		2023	
PRESENT	NOT PRESENT	PRESENT	NOT PRESENT
80%	57%	91%	64%

RECOMMENDATIONS

These are plain-language summaries of the recommendations. The full recommendations are available in the main IPODA report.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Use the data to understand barriers to organ donation. Organ donation teams should use IPODA and Irish National ICU audit data to identify where opportunities for organ donation may be being missed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase access to specialist organ donation staff. Specialist organ donation staff should be more consistently available when families are approached about organ donation.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Review why donation does not always go ahead. A national clinical group should use IPODA findings to understand why organ donation did not proceed in some cases and identify where improvements can be made.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Consider expanding IPODA. Organ Donation and Transplant Ireland will examine how IPODA could be expanded to more intensive care units and emergency departments.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Review the time criteria used for donation after circulatory death. Organ Donation and Transplant Ireland and transplant centres should review the time limits currently used when considering donation after circulatory death

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PATIENT AND PUBLIC INTEREST (PPI) REPRESENTATIVES



What a precious gift it is when a recipient receives a donated organ, and what a huge comfort such a donation is to the family of the donor. Speaking from lived experience, this can never be overstated.

That is why it is so important that every person nearing death is given the opportunity to be an organ donor, and that is why the results of reports such as this by the IPODA are of such significance.

Three very important points in the report for future focus

1. In cases where families do not assent to donation, was this because of the timing of the conversation or the manner in which the medical personnel involved in the conversation spoke with the family?

2. It is clear from the report that when embedded specialist staff are present at the approach conversation, assent rates are significantly higher, and If specialist staff lead the approach, the assent rates are higher again.

3. The reasons why families agreed to donation when first spoken to but then changed their minds.

I would agree that all five recommendations should be implemented, particularly Recommendation 2.

Martina Goggin
PPI Representative, IPODA Governance Committee



The ODTI, HSE and NOCA must work in unison to promote awareness of the need to donate organs, a dual approach targeting families concerning assent and the general public as potential donors would be powerful, we need to get the message out there or the backslide we are witnessing in key indicators will continue'

John Burns
PPI Representative, IPODA Governance Committee

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