

Where offered German pancreata get lost: process analysis of organ utilization

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Background: The majority of pancreata, offered in allocation, are discarded. This pancreas under-utilization is not well understood, so a thorough analysis of the allocation process seems necessary.

Methods: Allocation protocols of all Eurotransplant (ET)-registered German whole pancreas donors offered to allocation between 2005-2009 (n=1769) were analysed in detail including turn-down reasons, number of offers required to place (or discard) a pancreas, and time spans of allocation process.

Results: 656/1769 offered pancreata were transplanted (37.1%). 815 were repeatedly rejected and finally withdrawn from the allocation process, after being offered to a median of 5 centres (8 patients; vs. 3 centres/3 patients for transplanted organs). A further 239 pancreata were discarded following surgical inspection of the organ at the time of intended recovery. 128 pancreata were explanted but not used due to recipient-related reasons (n=63), or because the organs were damaged or had anatomic abnormalities (n=65). For the discarded organs, the mean time from registering the organ at ET and the decision to withdraw the organ was 6.8 ± 6.7 h. The reasons for rejecting an offer often differed between centres; a mean of 1.6 ± 1.1 different turndown causes was given for each pancreas (1.4 ± 1.1 for those finally transplanted, 1.8 ± 0.94 for those finally withdrawn). The reasons most frequently named were 'unfavourable lab results' (n=562), 'macroscopic damage' (n=239), 'long ICU stay' (n=225), and 'resuscitation' (n=181). Among the 293 organs with favourable P-PASS (< 15) and donor age (<30 years), 39% were discarded.

Discussion: The results allow a better understanding of where the organs get 'lost'. Further studies are currently underway to analyse in detail the reasons for rejecting the offered organs, especially those with a favourable P-PASS.

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