January - May 2019

HCB 524 – Special Topics in Bioethics: Organ Donation & Transplantation

Room 067

Meeting Dates:
January 31st
February 7th
February 14th
February 21st
February 28th
March 7th
March 14th
March 21st – No Class, Spring Break
March 28th
April 4th
April 11th
April 18th
April 25th
May 2nd
May 9th

Class Time: 6:00 – 9:00pm

Instructor:

Brian Papszycki, MA
Clinical Instructor, Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care & Bioethics
Bpapszycki@liveonny.org

Background

Organ and tissue donation is a relatively new intervention in the scope of medical history. Up until the late 1950’s there was no cure for end stage renal disease or similar ailments such as chronic heart disease, liver failure, COPD, cystic fibrosis or any other disease that causes irreversible organ failure. Deceased and living donation, although life-saving and in critical need across the U.S., has been the subject of ethical debate over the years. These discussions range from the ethics of brain death, the dead donor rule, allocation of organs, consent/autonomy and the means of registering people to be donors on the consent registry. Many of these debates are ongoing today.

In this class we will examine the history of organ donation from the first U.S kidney transplant in 1957, the creation and function of Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) and the current state of organ donation and transplantation. We will examine the process of organ donation,
including Brain Death Donation and Donation After Circulatory Death (DCD) as well as the many nuanced and often misunderstood aspects of donation such as family approach, the wait list, organ allocation and the role of religion/culture in consent.

This class will give students insight into both the bioethical studies of organ donation as well as the process and practical applications of donation from an OPO perspective.

**Course Objectives**

1. Student will be able to explain in detail the practical and ethical components of organ donation as they relate to the current state of medicine.
2. Students will explore historic and current thoughts on improving the organ shortage through the examination of clinical and ethical scenarios.

**Readings**

There is one major text for this course, Janet Radcliffe Richards’ *The Ethics of Transplant: Why Careless Thought Costs Lives*, which will be read in sections along with supporting articles throughout the class. This book is an excellent presentation of bioethical issues related to organ donation and practical thought on improving the current state of transplantation. This will not be read in order and specific sections will not be required.

**Course Calendar and Topics**

**January 31st**

**Introduction and Course Overview – Early Years of Organ Donation**

We will start with an examination of the early years of organ donation and how progress brought about new ethical and moral inquires. We will examine Radcliffe Richards introduction to organ donation and the ethics of transplant which opens with an inherent conflict about donation and how there is a “tension” amongst those waiting for a life-saving transplant and the potential donors and their families. We will also review the basics of organ and tissue donation, such as who can be a donor based on age and medical history and what can be donated.

**Assignment One:** On January 31st please come to class with a 3-page double spaced summary of your current understanding/attitude towards organ donation. This does not need to be based on any readings but rather from experience. We will discuss this along with the introduction to Radcliffe Richards’ text.
Readings:

*The Ethics of Transplant: Introduction (pp. 1-31)*


_February 7th_

**Brain Death vs. Donation After Circulatory Death (DCD)**

There are two different pathways to solid organ donation: Brain Death and Donation After Circulatory Death (DCD). Both types of donation raise their own set of ethical questions. We will examine both pathways in depth and discuss what ethical implications each has.

Readings:

*The Ethics of Transplant: pp 147-157 and 175-203*


_February 14th_

**Brain Death in the Media**

Public perception of brain death and organ donation play a major role in the rate of donation and the likelihood of 1) Someone signing up on the consent registry and 2) A family consenting to donate their loved one’s organs. The dead donor rule and legislation to outlaw the recovery of
organs from a non-consenting living person are fundamentally necessary for donation and transplant in the U.S, however myths and misconceptions still exist and can be influenced by the media. In this class we will explore some examples of brain death and donation/transplant in main stream media.

Readings:

*The Ethics of Transplant: pp 204-232*


*February 21st*

The Ethics of DCD

Before the Ad Hoc committee at Harvard developed the criteria for Brain Death in the early 1960’s, DCD was the only method of recovering organs for transplant. However, given the delicate nature of end-of-life decision making and the complex process of DCD, the ethical and moral debate about this donation pathway still stands today. In this class we will examine the DCD pathway and explore the ethical questions surrounding it.

Readings:


Currently the U.S. utilizes an opt-in system for people to sign up on the consent registry for organ donation. This means that one needs to voluntarily sign up on the registry to give first person consent for organ and tissue donation. Many believe that if the U.S adopted an opt-out system in which consent is presumed and one must voluntarily opt not to be an organ or tissue donor, that donation rates would increase and wait list times would decrease. Countries such as Spain, Belgium and Croatia have an opt-out system and boast increased donation rates over countries with systems like the U.S. In this class we will examine the ethical nature of these two systems and whether an opt-out system could be a feasible solution to the U.S. organ shortage.

Readings:

**The Ethics of Transplant:** pp 152-174


**March 7th**

**Organ Allocation: The Wait List**
Following our discussion about the op-in vs. opt-out registry systems, we will examine how the wait list and allocation of organs currently works in the U.S. We will examine the creation of the organization that currently regulates the waitlist, the United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS) and the ethical nature of allocating a scarce resource to those in need.

Assignment Two: On March 7th please come to class with a 5 to 7-page double spaced paper arguing for either an opt-in or opt-out consent registry system. Please consider both the articles and reading from The Ethics of Transplant. We will be discussing this during class.

Readings:


Smith M., The Gross Inequality of Organ Transplants in America, NEW REPUBLIC (Nov. 8, 2017), https://newrepublic.com/article/145682/gross-inequality-organ-transplants-america (finding that income disparities may affect patients that are in the organ waiting list).

March 14th

The Role of Religion in Organ Donation and Transplantation

Religion and culture play major roles in all of healthcare, especially when it comes to organ donation and transplantation. We will examine how religion can influence decision making when it comes to organ donation and how it effects the organ shortage, especially in New York and UNOS Region 9.

Readings:

March 21st *NO CLASS*

March 28
Living Donation vs. Deceased Donation

It is well known in the transplant community that an organ donated from a living recipient will (in most cases) function better and faster than an organ from a deceased donor. However, living donation is not without its own set of ethical considerations. In this class we will examine the process for living donation and the ethical and moral questions surrounding it.

Readings:

*The Ethics of Transplant: pp 32-102*


April 4th
Organ Donation Case Studies: Examining the Practical Ethics of Organ Donation

Organ donation is something that takes place in hospitals every day across the U.S. In this class we will examine several organ donation cases and how the ethical and moral quandaries that surround them were played out in real time. We will examine each case in depth and discuss during class.

Readings:


April 11th
The Organ Shortage: How Do We Improve?
Throughout this class we have repeatedly discussed the current shortage of organs in the U.S and worldwide; is there an answer to this growing need? In this class we will discuss several proposals to remedy this shortage as well as ways that New York State has attempted to improve over the years.

Reading:

*The Ethics of Transplant: pp 102-147 & 232-267*

McNamara and Beasely, Determinants of Familial Consent to Organ Donation in the Hospital Setting. *The Partnership for organ Donation Boston, Massachusetts. Social Issues in Organ Donation*, pp. 219-228


**April 18th**

**Advances in Organ Donation: The Future of Transplant**

The field of organ donation and transplantation has been growing rapidly since its inception and continues to do so today. Organs from patient with HIV and Hep C are now able to be transplanted. Vascular Composite Allografts (VCA) like face and arm transplants are becoming more mainstream and the “heart in a box” and “Ex-Vivo” lung machines are improving. All these advancements will shape the future of organ donation and transplant and create an entirely new train of ethical and moral thought.

Readings:

April 25th

Start Work on Final Project

This class along with the next two sessions will be dedicated to brainstorming and working on your final projects. This will last from now until the final presentations on May 9th. We will also be watching “My Sisters Keeper”, although not directly related to organ donation the main premise does raise concern for donation and transplantation.

Final Assignment: There will be three options for your final project:

1) Write a 10-page paper (with citations) on one of the sections from Radcliffe Richard’s work and relate to the status of organ and tissue donation in the U.S.

2) Conduct a survey of either family or peers related to organ and tissue donation and their perception of it. You must survey at least 3 people (if not more). Write a 10-page report to summarize your findings.

3) Re-write your initial assignment from Week 1, expand and discuss how your attitude towards organ donation has changed over the last semester. If it hasn’t, explain why.

May 2nd and May 9th

Final Presentation

These last two sessions will be dedicated to finishing and presenting your final projects.

Grading

Attendance and participation: 50%

Assignments One and Two: 10% each (20%)

Final Assignment: 30%

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Statements required to appear in all syllabi on the Stony Brook campus:

Americans with Disabilities Act:
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate.

Academic Integrity:
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report and suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (Schools of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Critical Incident Management:
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.