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Organ Donation Is a Community Affair

Executives should get involved locally and nationally.

Organ donation remains one of healthcare's most critical issues. Some incredible medical breakthroughs have occurred in the area of organ transplantation. Sadly, however, while the number of patients on the waiting list for organs continues to grow each year, the number of living donors in this country declines.

At press time, there were 108,565 people on the organ donor waiting list and only 7,136 registered donors, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The time to take action is now.

More than ever, all healthcare executives must get involved with promoting the cause of organ donation throughout their organizations, in their local communities and at the national level. Healthcare leaders can start by setting an example for their staff. Many healthcare leaders are already doing a great job with this—but we can always do more.

Because leadership sets the tone within an organization, you must demonstrate to your staff—through your words and actions—your belief in and support of organ donation.

Make it a point to personally sign up to be an organ donor, and, once a year, show staff your signed organ donation card. Hold up your card at a staff meeting, as I am holding up my card in the photo on this page. This physical demonstration of your support for organ donation will help encourage others within your organization to sign up to be organ donors.

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Encouraging staff to sign up to be an organ donor will raise awareness of the issue within your healthcare organization, helping to place renewed emphasis on your organization's organ donation policies.

For more information on how senior leaders can help improve organ donation within their organizations, read the Community Health Innovations column by Charles A. Mowll, FACHE, on page 56 of the September/October 2010 issue of *Healthcare Executive*.

Healthcare executives can also make an increased commitment to getting involved with organ donation by participating in national, state and local organ donation initiatives. For a wealth of information on how you and your organization can get involved, visit ache.org. On the home page, click the "Donate Life" button on the left-hand side.

This area of the website provides a variety of organ donation resources including information about how to become a donor, a link to ACHE's official Policy Statement on the topic and links to national programs with which you can get involved.

In addition, seek advice from and have periodic meetings with your local organ procurement organization (OPO). Consider inviting the president of your OPO to speak at your organization. For more information, visit the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations' website at www.aopo.org.

To help save lives, we as healthcare leaders must all work together to improve the state of organ donation in our hospitals and across the nation. During this holiday season—the season of giving—let us make a difference together. ▲

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