Facebook to Promote Organ Donation; May Benefit People With Hep C or HIV

May 1, 2012 By Tim Horn

Social networking giant Facebook has announced a plan to encourage its 161 million U.S. members to advertise their organ donor status in their profiles, according to The New York Times. The move may avert thousands of deaths in the United States among people waiting for transplants, which ultimately includes many people with hepatitis C virus (HCV) and/or HIV infection.

According to transplant experts interviewed by the Times, Facebook members who declare they are organ donors could prompt others to sign up through online registries or state motor vehicle agencies. The plan, announced May 1, could also create an informal alternative to such registries, as it would provide evidence of consent that family members need when deciding whether to donate the organs of a loved one.

Members will be able to declare and update their organ donation status through a new Facebook section called Health and Wellness, which will include links to online donor registries. The plan will initially be rolled out for Facebook members in the United States and United Kingdom. The company also plans to add it to several other countries in the coming months.

There are currently 114,000 people waiting for organ transplants, according to the federal government's Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network. There is, however, a shortage of organs to meet this need. Between 6,000 and 7,000 people have died annually during the past 13 years while waiting for organs.

As rates of end-stage liver disease continue to increase among people living with HCV—many of whom remain unaware of their infection and, as a result, are not receiving care and treatment—and as irreversible organ damage becomes more prevalent in people living longer with HIV, organ transplantation remains an essential component of survival for thousands of people living with either, or both, infections.

Though it is not clear if the Facebook plan will address the donation of tissues or organs for research purposes by those who do not qualify as transplant donors, such as those living with HIV, HCV and other infectious diseases, making the declaration may aid in the rapid collection of post-mortem biological samples gifted to organizations like the National Disease Research Interchange (NDRI), the National NeuroAIDS Tissue Consortium or the AIDS and Cancer Specimen Resource. As

with organs harvested for transplants, family members of the deceased often need to provide consent for tissues to be removed, even if the donor has registered with a registry or biospecimen organization.

Click here to read more about live and post-mortem gifting of tissues and organs for research.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/facebook-organ-transplants-22334-992974514