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'Just 1.2 % people aware of brain-dead donation'

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INDORE: A state-level organ donation regulatory body will be developed in either Indore or Bhopal in the next two months, said National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO's) director, Dr Vimal Bhandari on Saturday. In an interview with TOI's Sagar Choukse during his Indore visit, he spoke about the status of organ donations in the country and how Indore and the state are getting ready. Excerpts:

Q: What is the status of organ donations in the country?

Answer: The biggest issue is awareness. Though we have the best methods in the world to conduct live donations, there is only 1.2 per cent awareness when it comes to brain-dead donation. Spain has 35 per cent public awareness in this sphere. Every year we receive 2 lakh applications for kidney donations and 50,000 for heart and liver. Against this, only 7,500 kidneys, 50 hearts and 50 livers are made available.

Q. What is being done to fill this gap?

Answer: When I had joined, around 9,000 people had pledged to donate organs. But now that figure has crossed 13 lakh. We have a target to achieve 20 lakh pledges by the end of this year. To do this, we have tied up with many social organisations and have taken the help of the media to spread awareness. The government has also included a lesson in school curriculums and doctors are being trained in retrieving organs.

Q: Apart from spreading public awareness, what else do you emphasize on the most?

Answer: We are in the process to prepare a nationwide waiting list with the help of all hospitals. Registrations and networking will help bring in more transparency and ensure no organ goes to waste. For this, SOTTO, ROTTO and NOTTO should work on

a common waiting list.

Q: When will Madhya Pradesh get a SOTTO office?

Answer: Indore and Bhopal is in the race to get a SOTTO office to monitor and conduct organ retrievals and transplantations. The Centre will establish 10 SOTTO offices across the country in the next three months which will work under respective ROTTO offices. There are five ROTTO offices in the country.

Q: How has Indore performed in organ donations?

Answer: Indore has earned nationwide distinction by creating 19 green corridors in as many months and has shown tremendous progress. Indore Society for Organ Donation (ISOD) and social organizations associated with it has made extraordinary efforts to spread public awareness and successfully conduct organ retrievals and transplantations. Since Bhopal is the state capital, its chances of getting a SOTTO office are equally bright.

Q. Until SOTTO offices are set up here, what guidelines should Indore and Bhopal work on?

Answer: Name of donors and recipients should not be disclosed. The process to donate organs is still in its initial phase and until they get a SOTTO office, cities in the state will continue to follow guidelines laid down by ROTTO and NOTTO.

Q. What are some of NOTTO's new initiatives?

Answer: We have prepared allocation criteria for liver, pancreas, cornea and heart recipients while the process to digitalise records for kidney recipients will be completed in two months. A national bank for tissue, skin, bone, cartilage and cornea is being developed to provide recipients with organs according to a common nationwide priority list. The bank will have its branches under ROTTO and SOTTO.

Q. What challenges are faced in cases of donations after cardiac death (DCD)?

Answer: Organ retrieval in these cases need to conducted as soon as possible. Due to logistical and infrastructural issues, this is not possible at all centres. Some places like Chandigarh have done it. There is no major legal issue associated with DCD.