The Coroner & Donation

Samantha Wetzler M.D.
Why Donation Matters

• Public Health/ Public Service

• Coroners have recognized duty to serve
  – Volunteer
  – Elected
  – Paid
  – Public and Political support
Public health

- More Organs out locally – come back locally
- Waiting list
- Sheer numbers of lives enhanced
- Best or only option for some conditions
ONE OF THESE TWO WILL GET YOUR ORGANS. YOU DECIDE.
Sarcoptes scabiei
Fly that feeds on the decomposing remains of human bodies.

Washington P. Costa
31-year-old student waits on the queue for a lung transplant.
Why should we facilitate donation?

- **Donors Desire**
  - UAGA first person authorization
  - Legally binding
  Family asked to support not consent

42% U.S. population – (112 million) are registered
Why donate?

• Donor family’s wishes
• Accelerated healing
  – Good from bad
  – Some control over situation
  – Create a legacy – way to live on
  – Grief Assistance programs
Why donate

• Medical Therapy
• Sound and solid treatment options
• Better outcomes
• No other options - no man made solutions
Proven Science

- It works – 46,000 cornea transplants a year
- Restores sight
- Not experimental but first line therapy for many conditions
- The only therapy for other conditions
Corneal Disease

Corneal Transplants
Corneas

- Restore sight
- Prevent blindness
- Treating glaucoma
- Sclera used for oral grafts
Clear Vision
NO conflict

• No situation in which releasing the corneas interferes with the determination of cause and manner of death
Corneas as Cause of Death?

- Unless there is penetrating trauma to the eye
- Malignancy in the eye
- Overwhelming Infection
- NO cause of death is due to the eye that would be recovered
Why look at the EYE?

- Documentation
- Tatoos/ beautification
- Injury
- Petechia
- Time of death – clarity
- Part of the complete picture
Eye Jewelry Implants

Make the INTRAcon junctival pocket twice as wide as the diameter of the JewelEye implant because part of the scissor action only stretches the tissue.

Trendsetter Magazine.com
Eye Art: The Scleral Tattoo
Homicide, assault
fall
Cornea Donation

• Take photos
  – Details of color
  – Health of eye
  – Petechial hemorrhages in and around the eye

• Face time
fall
Icteric sclera - alcoholism
ME/ Coroner must have:

- Photos
- Vitreous (red top)
  - Electrolytes
  - Glucose
  - Drug testing (alcohol)
Sei Whale
Vitreous
• Descriptive
• Adjective or adverbs
• Useless as the main or only finding.
• Photos suffice
Hanging – no petechia
NO documented case of any donation interfering with death investigation

Anecdotal stories
Undetermined is not unheard of regardless
Legal outcomes are not the basis to judge interference
Cases causing concern

- Stack the pool! refer every case possible.
  - When denials are necessary - it is understood
- Pediatric abuse – abusive head trauma.
Want to continue the conversation?

- 6-8 pm tonight – Marriott Mt Hood Room - free fun, food, drinks, and conversation.
- What: First annual ad hoc Organ Tissue Committee "Transplant: Bring Your Own Slides/Discussion event".
- Casual attire (event sponsored by the American Association of Tissue Banks - AATB).
- Drink tickets limited to first 100 NAME member pre-registrants.
- E-mail Samantha Wetzler (sbwetzler@gmail.com) to register.
- If you don't arrive prior to 6:10pm your tickets will be given away
- You can provide an electronic copy personally by noon today to one of the panelists or by e-mail to Dan Schultz (dschultzmd@gmail.com).
Pre-recovery prep

• Watch a recovery  - Understand
• No lines/ tubes bandages removed
• Remove a helmet
• Wash with saline, iodine – 1” above the brow, 1” below lower lid
ME/ Coroner Cases

- Best source of young, healthy donors
- 70% of donors are ME/C cases
- U.S. is not uniform in its approach to death investigation
- 80% counties in U.S. coroner jurisdiction
ME/Coroner cases

• Younger, healthy patients

• Have the best visual recovery outcomes for recipient

• Best graft survival
Why are you really saying NO?

- Inconvenience
- Fear
- Not understanding
Inconvenience

• It is work

• Always a choice to be an ME/Coroner

• Who moved the cheese
  – Medicine and science keeps changing
Need to be thinking Win - Win
How can we all be satisfied?

• Protocols/ MOU’s
  – Plans made rationally, in advance
  – All situations covered – questions and concerns worked out

• Communication guides

• Follow Up/ Adherence

• Education
Protocols

- Permission – call each time?
- Move body to agreed upon location/ by X method
- Chain of custody maintained
- Post recovery
  - Where photos are
  - Where vitreous is
  - Diagrams/ communication of any significant findings
Communication

- If it’s not: hanging, child abuse, or homicide – go ahead pre-autopsy
- Photos guide: how & which
- Draw vitreous – labeling & delivery
- When to stop and call
Acting Responsibly

- All parties must maintain the agreements
- Education/Training to do it satisfactorily
- Understanding each other's needs –
  - Timelines
  - Goals
- Remediation if not working