THE Doha COMMUNIQUÉ
OF THE DECLARATION OF ISTANBUL CUSTODIAN GROUP (April 14, 2013)

On May 2, 2008, 150 representatives of scientific and medical bodies, government officials, social scientists, and ethicists from around the world adopted the Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism1 to mobilize medical professionals against the exploitation of persons who are compelled by need or force to provide organs for transplantation to people within their own countries or to foreigners. To mark the Fifth Anniversary of the Declaration and to evaluate progress in implementing its Principles and recommended Proposals, 70 members of the Declaration of Istanbul Custodian Group (DICG) met in Doha, Qatar, from April 12-14, 2013. The participants were heartened by the steps taken by health authorities in many countries that have prohibited transplant commercialism and have greatly reduced the flow of transplant tourists to sites where organ trafficking, including from executed prisoners, occurs. The Doha participants also commended the adoption in many places of safe, effective, and accountable practices that facilitate meeting the needs of transplant patients while protecting the rights of donors, such as the creation of systems of follow-up care for donors and the development of successful deceased donor programs in a number of countries. It was recognized, however, that many challenges remain, and the participants therefore endorsed the adoption of means of reporting organ trafficking, the development of more complete registries of transplants of all organs from deceased and living donors, increased cooperation with law enforcement authorities combating human trafficking, and the use of international conventions to ensure that organs are obtained and used in an ethical, safe and transparent fashion.

The Doha meeting participants resolved:

1. To re-affirm the Principles of the Declaration of Istanbul, which condemn transplant commercialism, organ trafficking, and transplant tourism, and to underline the urgency of putting the Principles into action in all settings where transplantation occurs.

2. To urge all member states of the World Health Organisation to adopt laws, regulations and practices consistent with World Health Assembly Resolution 63.22 and the Declaration of Istanbul, and in particular to enforce an end to transplant tourism and the use of executed prisoners as a source of organs for transplantation.

3. To develop and disseminate descriptions of the technical and organizational features of sustainable programs and systems that can be implemented in different countries to promote national self-sufficiency in organ transplantation, as elaborated in the Madrid Resolution in 2010, especially through the development of deceased donation and equitable regional cooperative arrangements.

4. To elaborate ethical approaches to acknowledging the generosity and humanity of donors and families in deceased organ donation programs.

5. To develop, and recommend implementation of, systematic ways for physicians to identify and report to appropriate registries (in a quantifiable but non-judgmental manner) patients returning with a donor organ from an “unverifiable source” or manifesting other indications of a vended organ.

6. To consider in detail the formats developed for the “xDot” reporting platform.

7. To develop a “white paper” discussing professional responsibilities in responding to patients who travel or plan to travel abroad for a transplant that would be illegal in their country of residence, including professional and public policies on the access of such patients to short- and long-term treatment in the national healthcare and insurance systems.

8. To develop a “white paper” exploring issues in, and addressing principles of access to, organ transplant waiting lists.

9. To engage more effectively with the organizations which have endorsed the Declaration.

10. To propose to the Declaration’s endorsing organizations a global network of physicians to act as “National Focal Points.”

11. To cooperate with organizations that are examining the common and overarching issues in the procurement and medical use of all products of human origin.

12. To participate actively in the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against trafficking in human beings as it relates to human trafficking for organ removal (HTOR) and the Draft Convention against trafficking in human organs (THO).

13. To develop means of communicating with and educating law enforcement authorities, as well as with human rights monitoring organizations, regarding HTOR and THO.

14. To support adoption of a uniform coding system to improve traceability and vigilance for human organs.

15. To assist the preparation and publication of a report on the implementation of the Doha Donation Accord.

16. To thank the Hamad Medical Corporation and the Supreme Council of Health of the State of Qatar for sponsoring the Doha meeting and for sharing with the participants the progress made in implementing the Doha Donation Accord in a manner consistent with the Declaration of Istanbul.

References:


2. The Madrid resolution on organ donation and transplantation: national responsibility in meeting the needs of patients, guided by the WHO principles. Transplantation. 2011 Jun 15;91 Suppl 11:S29-31

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