

Glossary of Terms for Organ Donation and Transplantation

Technical Terms for Donation and Transplantation

Appropriate Term	Inappropriate Term
“recover” organs	“harvest” organs
“recovery” of organs	“harvesting” of organs
“donation” of organs	“harvesting” of organs
“mechanical” or “ventilator” support	“life” support
“donated organs and tissues”	“body parts”
“deceased” donor	“cadaveric” donor
“deceased” donation	“cadaveric” donation
“registered as a donor”	“signed a donor card” (antiquated)

Blood Type

One of four groups (A, B, AB or O) into which blood is classified. Blood types are based on differences in molecules (proteins and carbohydrates) on the surface of red blood cells.

Candidate

A person registered on the organ transplant waiting list.

Criteria (Medical Criteria)

A set of clinical or biologic standards or conditions that must be met.

Deceased Donor

A patient who has been declared dead using either the brain death or cardiac death criteria and from whom at least one solid organ or some amount of tissue is recovered for the purpose of organ transplantation.



Donor

A deceased donor from whom at least one organ or some amount of tissue is recovered for the purpose of transplantation. A living donor is one who donates an organ or segment of an organ (such as a kidney or portion of their liver) for the intent of transplantation.

Living Donation

Situation in which a living person gives an organ or a portion of an organ for use in a transplant. A kidney, portion of a liver, lung or intestine may be donated.

Living Donor

A living person who donates an organ for transplantation, such as a kidney or a segment of the lung, liver or intestine. Living donors may be blood relatives, emotionally related individuals, or altruistic strangers.

Organ

A part of the body made up of tissues and cells that enable it to perform a particular function. Transplantable organs are the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, pancreas and intestines.

Organ Donation

To give an organ or a part of an organ to be transplanted into another person. Organ donation can occur with a deceased donor who can give kidneys, pancreas, liver, lungs, heart or intestinal organs, and with a living donor who can give a kidney or a portion of the liver, lung or intestine.

Organ Preservation

Methods used to preserve organs while they are out of the body in between recovery from a donor and transplantation into a recipient.

Organ Procurement or Organ Recovery

The removal or retrieval of organs from a donor for transplantation.

Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN)

In 1987, Congress passed the National Organ Transplant Act that mandated the establishment of the OPTN and Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients. The purpose of the OPTN is to improve the effectiveness of the nation's organ procurement, donation and transplantation system by increasing the availability of and access to donor organs for patients with end-stage organ failure. The Act stipulated that the Network be a non-profit, private sector entity comprised of all U.S. transplant centers, organ procurement organizations and histocompatibility laboratories.



Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) or Organ Recovery Organization

An organization designated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) responsible for the procurement of organs for transplantation and the promotion of organ donation. OPOs serve as the vital link between the donor and recipient and are responsible for the identification of donors, and the retrieval, preservation and transportation of organs for transplantation. As a resource to the community, OPOs engage in public education on the critical need for organ donation.

Potential Donor

A patient who meets the criteria for brain death with no absolute contraindications to organ donation – that is, they have no medical condition that would automatically rule out organ or tissue donation.

Procurement

The surgical procedure of removing an organ from a donor. Also referred to as recovery.

Recipient

A person who receives a transplant.

Recovery (Organ)

The surgical procedure of removing an organ from a donor. Also referred to as procurement.

Rejection

A phenomenon that occurs when a recipient's immune system attacks a transplanted organ, tissue or cell. Immunosuppressive drugs help prevent or treat rejection.

Split liver

A split liver transplant occurs when the donor liver is divided into segments and then transplanted. These segments may be transplanted into more than one recipient, or a segment could be transplanted into a child for whom an entire adult liver would be too large.

Tissue

An organization of a great many similar cells that perform a special function. Examples of tissues that can be transplanted are blood, bones, corneas, heart valves, ligaments and tendons.

Tissue Typing

A blood test that helps evaluate how closely the tissues of the donor match those of the recipient.



Transplant Center

A hospital that performs transplants, including qualifying patients for transplant, registering patients on the national waiting list, performing transplant surgery, and providing care before and after transplant.

Transplant Team

The diverse group of professionals at the transplant center who work to make a transplant successful. Each person on the “transplant team” is an expert in a different area of transplantation.

United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)

The private, nonprofit membership organization that coordinates the nation’s transplant system. As a contractor since the first OPTN contract award in 1986, UNOS has established and continually strives to improve tools, systems and quality processes that support OPTN contract objectives and requirements. These include:

- Managing the national organ transplant waiting list
- Collecting, managing and reporting of clinical data in a secure environment
- Facilitating a forum for development and continuous refinement of evidence-based policies and standards
- Member and policy performance assessment to ensure equitable, safe treatment of candidates and recipients
- Increasing donation and making the most of every organ that is donated through professional education, outcomes research, patient services and resources and public and professional education
- Continuously improving the care, quality of life and outcomes of organ transplant candidates and recipients

Ventilator

A machine that mechanically moves breathable air into and out of a patient when the patient is not able to breathe sufficiently.

Wait List

The list of candidates registered to receive organ transplants as managed by UNOS.

Waiting Time

The amount of time a candidate is on the Wait List. Waiting times can be influenced by many factors, including: blood type (some are rarer than others); tissue type; height and weight; size of donated organ; medical urgency; time on the waiting list; and other factors.

