

NATCO, THE ORGANIZATION FOR TRANSPLANT PROFESSIONALS POSITION STATEMENT

*That There Be a Better Quality of Life for the Thousands of Patients with
End-Stage Organ and Tissue Failure...And a Respect for Those Who
Donate Organs and Tissue*

NATCO, *The Organization for Transplant Professionals*, is the professional society representing approximately 2500 transplant professionals in two primary areas: organ procurement and transplant patient care.

Procurement transplant professionals facilitate the organ donation process, and are responsible for public and health team member education; development of donor programs in hospitals; donor identification and evaluation; counseling potential donor families; donor management; for coordination of surgical recovery of organs; and organ distribution. Clinical transplant professionals facilitate the transplantation process, providing continuity of care for the recipient. Their responsibilities include evaluation of living donors and transplant recipients; patient education; public and health team member education; and coordination of post-transplant follow-up.

Transplant professionals work collaboratively with other health care members to provide an effective therapeutic treatment option for patients with organ/tissue failure and ensure that every family is provided the option to donate organs and/or tissue.

NATCO encourages the expansion of educational programs to heighten both public and professional awareness of the benefits of organ donation and transplantation and supports the advancement of practice performance via a sound professional base. NATCO, as the professional society for this discipline of transplant professionals, sets forth and continually updates standards of practice for transplant professionals and educates practitioners within the specialty of transplantation, which serves to ensure the provision of quality care.¹ The principles NATCO supports include the following:

- NATCO endorses quality treatment availability for patients with end-stage organ/tissue failure and that such patients be provided complete and accurate information for alternate forms of therapy to transplantation, as well as information regarding associated risks and benefits of all therapies. NATCO recommends that patients be actively engaged in the decision making process regarding medical care and choice of therapy and treatment through education and the consent process.

¹ The positions expressed in this document have been developed based on NATCO's understanding of the transplant community, current advances in surgical techniques and immunosuppressive therapy, and our experiences as vital members of innovative multi-disciplinary teams that provide opportunities to save lives and for an improved quality of life.

- NATCO respects that each individual, as well as the family of every potential donor at the time of death, has the right to be given the opportunity and support to make a decision regarding organ and tissue donation. The information regarding organ/tissue donation should be provided to the family by professionals who are knowledgeable in the donor process and who can deliver the information with compassion and sensitivity. Regardless of an individual or family member's decision, it is imperative these decisions are honored and families receive professional support.
- NATCO advocates information be provided to donor families acknowledging the benefits of organ and tissue donation, and endorses the concept of patient confidentiality and anonymity for both donors and recipients. NATCO is supportive of the donor/donor family and recipient's right to reveal their identity if mutually agreed upon and within the support structure and guidelines of after-care programs.
- NATCO is committed to ensuring that patients diagnosed with end-stage organ/tissue failure be given equitable access to donor organs and tissues for transplantation and endorses measures to evaluate existing practices for organ/tissue sharing which ensure equitable allocation among waiting recipients.
- NATCO continues to endorse feasibility studies to evaluate public initiatives designed to increase organ and tissue donation.
- NATCO recommends testing all organ and tissue donors for the presence of communicable diseases in accordance with national standards to assure optimal healthy organs and tissues for transplantation or research and prevent transmission of such diseases in transplanted organs and tissues. Potential transplant recipients must be informed about the health and viability of the organ to make an informed decision to accept the organ for transplantation.
- NATCO endorses the findings and recommendations of the National Organ Transplant Act of 1984 and the National Task Force Report on Organ Transplantation (1986), as well as final rules implemented by the Department of Health and Human Services in 2001. In particular we support:
 - The continuation and advancement of educational programs for the public health care professionals concerning the need for donor organs and the donation process;
 - A national system of organ procurement and organ sharing organized on an equitable basis;
 - Implementation of uniform state codes and federal laws regarding organ procurement and transplantation that guarantees organ/tissue transplantation and immunosuppressive therapy for acceptable candidates using established criteria;

- National standards of practice and certification for procurement and preservation coordinators as well as clinical transplant coordinators and transplant nurses. NATCO further recognizes the contributions of the American Board of Transplant Certification (ABTC), which is responsible for the implementation and regulation of such certification; *and*
 - Federal legislation that supports increasing ways to attract other health care professionals to the transplant field;
- NATCO endorses the JCAHO requirement for hospitals requesting JCAHO accreditation to provide evidence of:
 - Policies and procedures in all hospitals for referral of all deaths to a qualified OPO, early notification of patients with a GCS of ≤ 5 to a qualified OPO, brain death declaration, and review of death records by the OPO to evaluate donor potential in the hospital;
 - Documentation, analysis and monitoring of donation process outcome data in the hospital; documenting and reporting to the appropriate committees, at a minimum: referral rate, consent rate, and conversion rate of potential organ and tissue donors; *and*
 - Compliance with JCAHO accreditation standards at least as stringent as those required by CMS (Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services) in regard to organ and tissue donation and transplantation.
- NATCO encourages Medicare and Medicaid – as well as private health plans – to provide adequate reimbursement for organ/tissue transplant therapies that have been proven successful by research and clinical studies.
- NATCO supports the continuation of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Transplantation in expanding and refining the efforts of organ/tissue donation and procurement activity and its responsibility in recommending changes that favorably affect patient care.
- NATCO acknowledges the need for collaboration with other professional organizations to increase public awareness, guarantee equitable access to organ and tissue donation and transplantation, identify best practices, share evidence-based research that enhances patient outcomes, and assure the dissemination of accurate, up-to-date information regarding transplantation.
- NATCO recommends evaluation of potential disincentives to transplantation such as income restrictions and proposes changes that would improve the potential for improved rehabilitation for organ transplant recipients.

- NATCO advocates intensified research efforts in the area of organ and tissue donation, procurement/preservation and transplantation, as well as its affect on society.
- NATCO supports the development of standards, which would protect care-givers from occupational and environmental health hazards and assure that such standards are updated to reflect current state-of-the-art practice.
- NATCO recognizes the need for accurate data on transplantation and organ procurement/preservation efforts, and therefore, supports the continuation and compliance requirements of the national scientific registries.
- NATCO supports outcome measures designed to ensure appropriate care and cost-effective practice, and therefore, endorses requirements for transplant facilities and organ procurement organizations that meet practice guidelines according to validated standards of care.
- NATCO endorses collaborative working agreements between organ procurement agencies, eye banks, and tissue banks to provide a consolidated potential donor referral and utilization service.
- NATCO encourages all recoveries of organs and tissues be performed in a professional, cooperative and coordinated manner which respects the donor and maximizes the benefits to potential recipients.
- NATCO supports and encourages the inclusion of clinical and procurement transplant professionals including but not limited to clinical and procurement/preservation coordinators, hospital development professionals, donation and transplantation social workers, transplant dietitians, and transplant nurse practitioners on policy-making Boards, Commissions, task forces and other groups responsible for establishing or modifying public policy affecting organ/tissue donation and transplantation.