

# Know the facts about buying an organ overseas



UHN

## For patients with end-stage kidney or liver disease and their families

Read this brochure to learn about:

- What transplant commercialism and transplant tourism mean
- Why buying an organ is dangerous
- Where to get more information

This document is adapted from the Declaration of Istanbul Custodian Group pamphlet "Thinking of buying a kidney: Stop".

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)

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## **What is transplant commercialism and tourism?**

Buying and selling organs is called “transplant commercialism” and is illegal in almost all countries of the world. Leaving the country where you live to buy a transplant organ in another country is called “transplant tourism”.

**In Canada, buying and selling organs is against the law.  
The buying and selling of organs is not safe and causes more harm than good.**

## **What should I know before thinking about buying a kidney or liver overseas?**

### **Buying an organ is dangerous for the recipient.**

Transplant recipients often face unsafe conditions in the hospital where the transplant is done. The hospital may:

- Not be licensed
- Not have the resources, equipment, or expertise to do the transplant surgery safely
- Not have high standards of hygiene (cleanliness)

Transplant recipients may:

- Have a higher chance of organ failure, rejection, serious infections (that are hard to treat), and even death
- Not be properly tested for serious medical conditions like heart disease, which also makes the transplant surgery unsafe

Transplant recipients face many problems when they return to Canada, including:

- The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) not paying for the transplant
- Difficulty with follow-up care if they return home without proper health records or medicines

## **Buying an organ is dangerous for the organ seller.**

People who are willing to sell their organ often live in severe poverty. Organ sellers are not getting out of poverty by selling their organ. Organ sellers may:

- Have poorer health after surgery, which affects their ability to work
- Have a broker or middleperson who takes most of the money paid by the recipient

Organ sellers may face many health issues, including:

- Not knowing all the risks of the surgery and hiding important health information to get the money
- Not getting the right health care during and after the surgery
- Feeling sadness, shame and worry about their health after the sale

## **What is being done to stop transplant commercialism?**

Hospitals, other medical organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO) and health care professionals all over the world have come together to try to end the buying and selling of organs. Several countries have closed hospitals that are involved in transplant tourism and arrested the brokers.

## **What can I do?**

Talk with your health care team about your medical condition to see if a kidney or liver transplant is right for you. If you are a transplant candidate your doctor will discuss the different ways to get a transplant in Canada.

## **Where can I get more information?**

### **The Canadian Society for Transplantation**

 Website: [www.cst-transplant.ca](http://www.cst-transplant.ca)

- See the downloadable PDF: [www.cst-transplant.ca/\\_Library/\\_documents/Organ\\_Trafficking\\_Transplantation\\_Tourism\\_Policy\\_August\\_2010\\_Final.pdf](http://www.cst-transplant.ca/_Library/_documents/Organ_Trafficking_Transplantation_Tourism_Policy_August_2010_Final.pdf)

### **The Declaration of Istanbul**

 Website: [www.declarationofistanbul.org](http://www.declarationofistanbul.org)