

What does the public think about paying people to donate their organs?

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To address the growing transplant organ shortage, members of the public seem to support eliminating disincentives, but are against providing financial incentives, to living kidney donors. The findings come from a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (CJASN)*.

As transplant waiting lists around the world continue to grow longer over time, there is increasing debate about whether it's ethical to provide incentives for living donations. Some say this could lead to exploitation of financially vulnerable individuals, and it might discourage altruistic donations that form the basis of current policies.

Allison Tong, PhD, MPH (The University of Sydney) and her colleagues conducted a study to gain in-depth insights into [public opinion](#) on this controversy. To do so, they established 12 focus groups with 113 participants who were recruited from the general [public](#) in 3 Australian states.

Participants considered reimbursement and justifiable recompensation of costs related to donation to be legitimate ways of supporting donors. Financial payment beyond reimbursement was regarded as morally reprehensible and would threaten community values of goodwill, human dignity, and fairness, with the potential for exploitative commercialism. Some participants believed that regulated compensation could be a defensible strategy to increase donation rates provided that mechanisms are in place to protect donors.

"Our findings suggest that there could be strong public resistance to policies that would support financial inducement for living [kidney donors](#). Instead, addressing the removal of disincentives would be more acceptable to the general public," said Dr. Tong. Given that living [kidney donation](#) programs depend on members of the public to come forward to donate, the public should be actively engaged in ongoing debates, she added.

More information: The article, entitled "Focus Group Study of Public Opinion about Paying Living Kidney Donors in Australia," will appear online at cjasn.asnjournals.org/ on April 23, 2015.

Provided by American Society of Nephrology

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