

# Re-assessing organ availability

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Organ transplantation is often a last treatment available to many patients facing end-stage diseases. More than 125,000 patients are currently on the wait list for an organ transplant, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. But, based on currently practiced approaches of accepting organs, the availability remains limited. Consequently, the health of these patients deteriorates and UNOS estimates that, on average, 20 people die each day while waiting for a transplant.

In a new review article, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, investigators from Brigham and Women's Hospital highlight a largely untapped, existing opportunity: the use of deceased-donor organs that are currently excluded from potential [transplant](#) due to old age, a hepatitis C infection, or cardiac death. The team notes that newly developed approaches and treatments could allow for the successful transplantation of these organs that were previously considered unusable.

"We see a potential opportunity to narrow the gap between the current supply and demand by utilizing available organs" said Stefan G. Tullius, MD, Ph.D., chief of [transplant surgery](#) at Brigham and Women's Hospital and lead author of the study. Tullius also thinks that novel methods of preserving organs may facilitate assessment and reconditioning of organs that are considered 'suboptimal'.

Dr. Tullius also adds, that while we see the potential benefit to expanding the potential donor pool, "the specific risk that would be acceptable in using these organs will need to be defined, and the risk-benefit analysis will need to be made explicitly clear to patients."

**More information:** Tullius S et al. "Improving the Supply and Quality of Deceased-Donor Organs for Transplantation" *The New England Journal of Medicine* [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMr1507080](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMr1507080)

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

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