

Study finds organ donations after medical assistance in dying made up 14% of deceased donations in Quebec

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To understand the impact of organ donation after medical assistance in dying (MAiD), Quebec researchers analyzed data on all patients referred to Transplant Québec for possible organ donation after MAiD from January 2018 to December 2022. This represented the first five full

years when organ donation after MAiD was allowed in the province. The study is published in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Over the five-year period, Transplant Québec received 245 referrals for donation after MAiD, with an increase in annual referrals from 21 in 2018 to 109 in 2022. The total number of donor patients after MAiD was 64, increasing from eight in 2018 to 24 in 2022.

Donations after MAiD represented 14% of all deceased organ donations in 2022, and the majority of the donors had [neurodegenerative diseases](#), with [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis](#) the most common condition. The average age of donors after MAiD was 60 years, and 64% were male.

"Our analysis of data related to [organ donation](#) after MAiD in Quebec shows that organ donation organizations can establish systems that honor the wishes of patients pursuing MAiD to donate their organs after their death," writes Dr. Matthew Weiss, a pediatric critical care physician at Center Mère-Enfant Soleil du CHU de Québec, Quebec, and medical director at Transplant Québec, with co-authors.

"However, much remains to be learned regarding how to optimize the system to ensure that donation requests are treated in the most ethical and medically effective way."

The authors note that it is not known how many patients were offered the choice to donate after MAiD or what the consent rate is in that group, as there is currently no system to track this information.

"Patients considering MAiD are among the most vulnerable patients in the health care system, as they have intractable diseases that cause them immense suffering. The desire of some patients to help others after their death must be honored, but in doing so, donation professionals must assure the system respects their autonomy and dignity," the authors

conclude.

More information: Organ donation after medical assistance in dying: a descriptive study from 2018 to 2022 in Quebec, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2024). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.230883](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.230883)

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