

Making a Life Saving Decision

Organ donation is both a simple and challenging commitment

First, a few sobering statistics. 22 people die every day while waiting for an organ transplant. However, one organ donor can save eight lives.

Many states, like Illinois, have made becoming an organ donor an easy process. You simply have to indicate on your driver's license that you'd like to be one.

Dr. Edward Pyun, Jr., Trauma Medical Director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center, in Rockford, says he, his trauma team and medical staff, routinely discuss organ donation with patients and families.

"They need to address the concerns they might have about how this works," says Dr. Pyun, Trauma Medical Director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "How does their loved one, how would their loved one be thought of in the situation. And, I think, singularly, we always go to the fact that we want all individuals to have the right to choose for themselves, to potentially help others in their bad situations."

However, Dr. Pyun is quick to point out that the decision to be an organ donor should never be a singular action. The process can best succeed if a prospective donor shares their desire with those close to them.

"I always want to believe that people should really talk to their families to reinforce their beliefs, their feeling about the situation," says Pyun. And, I think, that always makes it easier, instead of just finding out their family member has decided to be a first donor for organ donor consent - cause they might be aware of that and that makes it harder on them."

Through its collaboration with Gift of Hope, an Illinois-based organ and tissue donor network, Saint Anthony was recognized earlier this year by the Illinois Secretary of State for its life-saving efforts - ranking in the top 15 of all Illinois hospitals for tissue donation in 2016.

While proud of accomplishment, Dr. Pyun admits much more education about organ donation and many more donors are needed.

"Many are still waiting on what I would call a transplant list," says Pyun. "Without the possibility of an organ, these people will die, some of them at very young ages, especially with lung problems and kidney problems." And, allowing them to get the gist of an organ allows them to live a much longer and happier life, for which they would never have the opportunity."

While any donation is welcomed, Dr. Pyun says the greatest need is for kidneys and livers.

Learn more at www.giftofhope.org.