

*Interview***Leading the Way: GMCH Nagpur Sets a New Benchmark in Deceased Organ Donation in Maharashtra**

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Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Nagpur was recently honoured with the award for 'Highest Number of Deceased Organ Donations Facilitated by a Government Hospital in Maharashtra.' Congratulations! Could you share how many donations have been carried out so far and walk us through the journey that led to this recognition?

Thank you! We are truly honoured by this recognition. Since 2024–2025, GMCH Nagpur has facilitated a total of 13 deceased organ donations, leading to the retrieval of:

- 23 kidneys
- 11 livers
- 34 pairs of corneas

This journey has been immensely meaningful. The achievement reflects the collective commitment of our entire organ donation and transplantation ecosystem – ranging from our dedicated transplant coordinators and social workers to the clinical teams in our Trauma and Medicine ICUs.

As the head of GMCH, I am personally committed to this cause. We have embraced organ donation not just as a programme, but as a mission. We have built this programme step-by-step, focusing equally on both clinical readiness and community awareness.

Since 2024, how many organs and tissues have been retrieved, and how many have been utilised within GMCH itself?

In 2024 alone, we carried out 11 organ donations, and of those, 7 kidneys were transplanted at GMCH itself. This represents a significant step towards our goal of becoming self-sufficient in transplantation services. Most importantly, these in-house transplants allow us to provide life-saving kidney surgeries completely free of cost to patients from economically disadvantaged backgrounds suffering from end-stage renal disease.

What would you say are the key factors that have contributed to the success of GMCH's organ donation and transplantation programme?

Several critical factors have contributed to our progress:

First and foremost, the strong coordination between the Trauma ICU and Medicine ICU teams and their proactive involvement, have created a supportive ecosystem for organ donation. We also hold regular review meetings to identify and address any bottlenecks. These internal discussions keep everyone aligned with our shared goals.

Secondly, our transplant coordinators and social workers play a vital role. They engage with the families of brain-dead

individuals with empathy, compassion, and clarity, often during incredibly emotional moments. The support of MOHAN Foundation's transplant coordinator has been particularly instrumental in this regard.

Thirdly, we've made mass awareness a core pillar of our strategy. Street plays are regularly conducted in high-footfall hospital areas such as OPDs, wards, and casualty departments to educate both patients and their attendants about the importance of organ donation.

What are the main challenges facing organ donation and transplantation programme in Nagpur?

Our patients predominantly come from rural and semi-urban backgrounds, where illiteracy and lack of awareness are major hurdles. These factors contribute to deep-rooted myths and misconceptions about organ donation.

Personal and cultural beliefs, combined with emotional distress at the time of a loved one's death, cause families to hesitate. Additionally, mistrust in the healthcare system remains a barrier. Addressing these concerns requires persistent, empathetic public engagement.

On the other hand, what opportunities do you see for growth and improvement in this field?

Public awareness is key - the biggest opportunity lies in expanding public awareness beyond the hospital setting. We plan to conduct regular awareness campaigns in bus stands, railway stations, markets, malls, temples, and public gardens. These are high-footfall zones where we can reach people from diverse walks of life and normalize conversations around organ donation in everyday life.

What are GMCH Nagpur's future plans for advancing its organ donation and transplantation programme?

We have a clear and ambitious roadmap. To begin with, we are preparing to introduce robotic donor nephrectomy, which will enhance surgical precision and reduce recovery time for living donors.

Looking ahead, we're working to initiate liver and heart transplant programmes at both GMCH and Super Speciality Hospital and Post Graduate Institute (SSPGI), Nagpur. These advancements will not only boost our transplant capabilities but also establish Nagpur as a regional centre of excellence in public-sector transplantation.

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