

*Interview***Organ Donations from Bhopal: An Emerging Trend**

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AIIMS Bhopal recently witnessed its first deceased organ donation. Could you share more details about this significant milestone?

Yes, AIIMS Bhopal recently achieved a significant milestone by conducting its first deceased organ donation. The donor was a young 37-year-old man who had suffered a traumatic brain injury and was declared brain dead after all medical protocols were followed. The family, with great courage and compassion, agreed to donate organs that gave a new lease of life to multiple recipients. This event marks a turning point in AIIMS Bhopal's journey in organ donation, reflecting the hospital's readiness, coordination, and commitment to life-saving work.

While this marks the first donation at AIIMS Bhopal, the city has seen other cases of organ donation. How many deceased donations have taken place in Bhopal so far, and could you tell us more about them?

So far, Bhopal has seen about 25 deceased organ donations in the past couple of years, across different hospitals including private and government settings. Each case has had a unique story, some initiated by families coming forward on their own, others through sensitive counselling at the right time. What's encouraging is that Bhopal is now appearing more frequently on the national organ donation registry, which shows the growing trust and awareness among people.

What organs have been retrieved in these donations? Were any of them transplanted at AIIMS Bhopal?

In recent donations, organs such as hearts, kidneys, liver, corneas, and occasionally heart valves have been retrieved. So far, 54 kidneys, 23 livers and 7 hearts have been retrieved through deceased donations in Bhopal.

In AIIMS Bhopal's case, kidneys were retrieved and one of them was successfully transplanted within the institute itself. The others were allocated as per NOTTO and SOTTO guidelines to other registered transplant centers.

AIIMS Bhopal has also successfully performed two heart transplants.

You are associated with two organisations working in the field of organ donation. Could you tell us more about these NGOs and the role they've played in facilitating these donations?

Yes, I am associated with Kiran Foundation and another

community outreach initiative (GMC Alumni Association). Kiran Foundation has been working extensively to spread awareness about organ donation, support donor families, and conduct sensitization programs in schools, colleges, and hospitals. During these recent cases, the NGO helped in donor family counselling, coordination with SOTTO officials and post-donation emotional support to families. We believe in not just enabling donation, but also celebrating the legacy of donors and giving strength to their families.

What is the current status of organ transplantation in Bhopal? What are some of the hospitals performing transplants?

Organ transplantation in Bhopal is steadily progressing. Kidney transplants are being performed in both public and private hospitals. Liver transplants are being carried out by a private hospital. AIIMS Bhopal has conducted two heart transplants till date.

The infrastructure has evolved significantly over the last few years - transplant teams have been trained, green corridors are operational, and coordination with SOTTO/NOTTO has improved. However, there is still a long way to go in terms of building a robust, city-wide transplant ecosystem.

Some of the hospitals which perform Transplants are AIIMS Bhopal, Bansal Hospital, Sidhanta Red Cross and Apollo Sage.

Are there plans to expand into other types of organ transplants in the near future?

Yes, definitely. The vision is to eventually move towards performing liver and heart transplants more extensively, especially in tertiary centers like AIIMS. Some private hospitals have already started liver transplants with support from teams outside Bhopal. The need of the hour is to invest in capacity-building - training, ICU readiness, donor maintenance protocols - and simultaneously building public confidence in deceased organ donation.

What are some of the key initiatives being undertaken to raise awareness and promote organ donation across Madhya Pradesh?

We are working on a multi-pronged approach:

- Awareness sessions in schools and colleges with help from the district administration.



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- Donor family felicitation programs to honour their courage.
- Public campaigns like organ donation walks, rallies, and street plays.
- Regular media engagement and myth-busting series via digital platforms.
- Collaboration with medical colleges and hospitals to train doctors and paramedics on brain death identification and donor counselling.
- The support from SOTTO MP and local authorities has also been instrumental in amplifying these efforts.

From your perspective, what are the main challenges and opportunities when it comes to organ donation and transplantation in Bhopal?

The biggest challenges are:

- Lack of public awareness and myths around organ donation.
- Emotional difficulty in consent, especially in grief situations.
- Limited transplant-ready infrastructure in most hospitals.
- Shortage of trained transplant coordinators and ICU teams.

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On the other hand, the opportunities are immense:

- High potential donor pool in trauma and neuro ICUs.
- Presence of institutions like AIIMS and HAMIDIA that can lead the movement.
- Growing interest among youth and community leaders to become advocates for the cause.
- Policy support and evolving ecosystem through SOTTO and NOTTO.

**Is there anything else you'd like to add before we close?**

Yes, I would just like to highlight that organ donation is the highest form of human compassion - where death gives rise to life. Behind every successful transplant is a grieving family that chose hope over despair. As a society, it's our responsibility to create systems and sentiments that honour these decisions. We're hopeful that Bhopal can emerge as a model city in central India for ethical, timely, and life-affirming organ donation and transplant services.

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