



NATCO, THE ORGANIZATION FOR TRANSPLANT PROFESSIONALS POSITION STATEMENT

ORGAN TOURISM

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Because the US supply of organs does not meet demand, some residents consider obtaining a donor organ from another country. In fact, countries such as China actively solicit foreigners for transplantation at their facilities. Organ tourism, the practice of US residents traveling overseas for the express purpose of obtaining organ transplantation, is clinically and ethically problematic. In addition to documented problems with graft quality, endemic communicable disease, and poor hygiene practices,^{1,2,3} there is the serious ethical matter of exploitation of organ donors. In China, for example, several hospitals have admitted to obtaining organs from live prisoners who are then killed after donation.⁴ In India, many living donors suffer complications, and some donations are forced.⁵

While United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) policy allows non-residents to come to the US for transplantation, such practices are volume limited, there are protections against the exploitation of donors, and transplant centers work amid safety and quality guidelines.⁶ Although this UNOS policy is not without ethical controversy,⁷ it nonetheless represents a formal program with regulatory oversight. The following NATCO policy applies to the practice of US residents obtaining organ transplants at non-US transplant centers.

POLICY:

In accordance with the NATCO Code of Ethics,⁸ all transplant personnel must maintain the highest standard of professional conduct and act to protect the health and safety of organ donors and recipients. Organ tourism is not in harmony with these goals thus NATCO condemns this practice. Further, NATCO opposes any US insurance programs which promote organ tourism.⁹ Transplant practitioners who knowingly participate in organ tourism shall not be allowed membership in NATCO as this violates the principles of the NATCO Code of Ethics.

Patients who participate in organ tourism should not be abandoned by their US healthcare providers when they return home for post-transplant care.^{10,11} Providers who have ethical discomfort in these situations should refer these patients to other practitioners, unless the situation is an emergency, in which case, they must attend to the patient.

NATCO's journal, *Progress in Transplantation*, will not publish any article in which the authors cannot attest to informed consent of organ donors/their families (unless such articles are from countries which practice presumed consent), as well as research review board approval (for research studies). Similarly, conferences sponsored by NATCO shall not allow presentation of cases or research data which do not meet these stipulations.

NATCO members shall strive to educate the transplant community about the clinical and ethical complexities of organ tourism, including donor exploitation and marginalization of donor and recipient safety and welfare.

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