



Title	PubliForum on transplantation medicine
Agencies	TA-SWISS, Swiss Science and Technology Council/Technology Assessment (in collaboration with Federal Office for Public Health and Swiss National Science Foundation) Birkenweg 61, CH-3003 Berne, Switzerland; Tel: +41 31 322 9966 Fax: +41 31 323 3659 http://www.ta-swiss.ch
Reference	Citizen Panel Report, TA-P 2/2000, available in English, French, German, and Italian www.publiforum2000.ch

Aim

Developments in the transplantation of organs, tissues and cells raise many hopes. However, many uncertainties and problems are also emerging. This PubliForum would like to help initiate a broad debate on the possibilities and limitations of transplantation medicine, and promote the exchange of ideas between specialists and the man/woman on the street. Such a dialogue is especially important as the Swiss authorities are currently drafting legislation on transplantation.

Conclusions and results

The PubliForum gave a group of 30 laypeople the opportunity to discuss various aspects of transplantation medicine with professionals from a broad array of specialized branches. The laypeople then wrote a report giving their perceptions of the situation and their recommendations to decision-makers in the fields of politics, the economy, medicine, and scientific research.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the laypanel included the following:

- We are seriously concerned in seeing that the general population is better informed on transplantation medicine so as to enhance transparency and increase the willingness to donate.
- Although the explicit prior patient consent solution respects the dignity of the donor to the highest degree, we would recommend that Parliament incorporate the extended solution into the law on transplantation in view of increasing the availability of organs.
- It appears that medical personnel exert significant influence on the willingness to donate organs. For this reason, we would recommend that stronger emphasis be placed on training them in the area of communication and in dealing with family members.
- The advantages of xenotransplantations mentioned by the experts are hardly capable of offsetting the extensive risks. Therefore, we place enormous emphasis on alternatives (eg, artificial organs, stem cells).

Methods

The PubliForum has been developed on the basis of the “Consensus Conference” method. The following steps were involved in this PubliForum:

- About 10 000 persons living in Switzerland were randomly contacted.
- From the 100 persons who registered, 30 were selected taking into consideration age, sex, profession, and linguistic region.
- The Citizen Panel met for 2 preparatory weekends to determine which questions were to be discussed in the course of the PubliForum and which experts were to be asked to provide information on these questions.
- The Citizen Panel met these experts for 2 days and wrote a report.

A professional mediator assisted the Citizen Panel throughout the process.

Written by Danielle Bütschi Häberlin, TA Centre, Switzerland