

Ethico-Religious Concerns on Medical Practices of Transferring Body-parts: Sanctity of the Body vs. Life Preservation

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Abstract

Among modern advances in the field of medicine are the medical practices of organ and tissue transplantation; the process of removing given body organs from prospective organ donors, dead or alive, and transplanting it into the body of an intended recipient, often with the aim of replacing the recipient's damaged or failing organs with healthy ones. These medical practices are performed to save the life of intended patients (organ recipients). Nevertheless, with the intention of preserving the sanctity and the dignity of the human life, ethicists and religious scholars often raise serious questions, and to some extent, objections to certain aspects of this type of medical practices related to the source of organs, the mental and health conditions of the organ donors, monetary roles in getting the organ from the donor and the social implications of organ transplantation in the posterior generations (family lineage). Saving life, which is the main motive of organ transplantation, and preservation of the sanctity and the dignity of current and posterior generations of men and women, which is the main focus of ethics, are both noble aims. Yet though these two aims seem to be complementary ones, there are instances in which achieving both aims at the sometime is not an easy task. Like other medical practices in which the balance between what ought to be and what can be achieved are demanded, tissue and organ transplantation form among essential topics upon which ethics, religion and medicine intersect. This work intends to address ethical and religious concerns about the tissue and organ transplantation through and within the viewpoints of the Muslim jurists (*fuqaha*). The discussion begins with a brief introduction about the Islamic principles of life saving and protecting the sanctity of the body, and then proceeds with the Muslim jurists' legal and religious concerns on medical practices of transferring body-parts from organ donors to the organ recipients.