

# New Travel Trend - Transplant Tourism



A new trend in medical tourism is the growing demand for transplants. Human organs for transplants are in short supply and as a result, people travel from wealthy developed countries to the less developed parts of the world to receive treatment. The most wanted organs are kidneys. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some 66,000 kidney transplants took place in 2005 and this covered only 10 per cent of the estimated need. The number of kidney and liver donors is on the rise but it still does not match the demand.

For WHO, it would be preferable if countries made use of organs taken from donors in their own populations, rather than have the buying and selling that goes on in developing countries where many people are lured into selling their kidneys. According to Dr Farhat Moazam of Pakistan, there are some villages in his country where 40-50 per cent of the villagers have only one kidney because they have sold the other one for a transplant, probably to a wealthy foreigner. Dr. Moazam claims that donors are offered Rs150,000 for a kidney, but in the end they receive only about half of that because middlemen take the rest. Dr Luc Noel of WHO warns: "Live donations are not without risk, whether the organ is paid for or not," and also points out that "The donor must receive proper medical follow-up but this is often lacking when he or she is seen as a means to making a profit. Donations from deceased persons eliminate the problem of donor safety and can help reduce organ trafficking." The WHO is concerned about these practices and as Dr. Noel says: "Nonexistent or lax laws on organ donation and transplantation encourage commercialism and transplant tourism." He added that, "If all countries agree on a common approach and stop commercial exploitation, then access will be more equitable and we will have fewer health tragedies."

Date: 2007-04-24

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/new-travel-trend-transplant-tourism-news298>