

Most Russians Would Not Donate Their Organs, Survey Shows

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October 02, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

Most Russians would refuse to have their organs posthumously donated, independent pollster the Levada Center revealed Thursday.

Asked whether they would agree to give up their organs after death, 21 percent of respondents to a recent poll said yes, 41 percent said it was unlikely, 21 percent said they were unable at this point to make such a decision, and 13 percent found themselves unable to answer the question at all.

Currently in Russia, the relatives of the deceased generally call the shots on organ donation. Last year 1,400 organ transplants were performed — accounting for less than 16 percent of the number of patients in need of new organs, according to the Health Ministry. By comparison, 28,953 organ transplants were conducted in the U.S. last year.

Last week, a senator suggested that Russia allow each individual to indicate his preference

for or against organ donation on official documents, such as a driver's license or passport.

The draft law, submitted by Senator Anton Belyakov, also calls for the creation of a nationwide electronic database for potential organ donors.

Only 9 percent of respondents to the Levada Center poll supported Belyakov's suggestion that individual preferences on organ donation should be made openly available on official documents.

Thirty percent of respondents said such information should be kept private, accessible only to a small number of relevant individuals.

Sixteen percent said it made no difference how such information was registered, and 8 percent said it should not be registered at all.

Some countries have systems of presumed consent, where citizens are required to opt out if they don't wish to donate their organs after dying. Spain, Austria and Belgium rely on such systems, resulting in relatively high donor rates.

In the U.S. and U.K., organ donation is voluntary, but individuals who would let their organs be used for transplants must register.

In Israel, being an organ donor can save your life: Those who have given consent to have their organs ultimately donated are given priority if they themselves wind up on a waiting list for an organ.

The Levada Center poll was conducted from Sept. 26 to 29 among 1,630 adults. It had a margin of error of 3.4 percent.

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