



University professor heads national organ donor campaign (图)

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Mar 16, 2007, A leading academic from the University of Bedfordshire will be the main speaker at the launch of UK Transplant's Can we count on you? black and South Asian organ donor campaign on 20 March.

Professor Gurch Randhawa, Director of the Institute for Health Research at the University, will join TV stars Nina Wadia from Goodness Gracious Me, Asif Khan from Dalziel and Pascoe and comedienne Gina Yashere, for the launch of the national awareness campaign in London.

Professor Randhawa, who was appointed the lead academic on the Department of Health's Organ Donation Taskforce earlier this year, explained: "Black and South Asian people living in the UK have a much greater chance of needing a kidney transplant than the general population, as they are more likely to develop diabetes or high blood pressure, both of which are major causes of kidney failure.

"Unfortunately, while the need for donor organs is three to four times higher than among the general population, donation rates are relatively low among black and Asian people. This reduces the chances of finding a successful match, as organs are matched by blood group and tissue type, and patients from the same ethnic group are more likely to be a close match.

"Therefore if more black and Asian people are to receive successful transplants, we need to encourage people from these communities to become donors."

Latest figures from the Potential Donor Audit revealed families and friends of black and Asian potential donors are more likely to withhold consent for donation to take place than for white donors. The refusal rate for non-white potential donors is 69 per cent, compared with 35 per cent for white potential donors.

Professor Randhawa has spent many years researching issues relating to transplantation, diabetes and kidney disease among ethnic minority groups. He pioneered research in the UK examining cultural and religious influences towards organ donation among South Asian groups.

He believes the reason black and South Asian people are more likely to refuse consent, is because there is a confusion about the donation and transplantation process, and who can donate and receive organs. He also found there are cultural issues such as reluctance to discuss death, and religious objections to organ donation.

Professor Randhawa added: "There appears to be little awareness of why Asian and black people are more likely to need a transplant, or the link between hypertension, diabetes and kidney failure, which is why the Can we count on you? campaign is so important and will hope fully encourage black and Asian people to give something back.

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