



Undocumented Immigrants and Transplantation

Mel Bearns

Chair – Latino Work Group

**California Transplant Donor Network
Community Development Liaison**

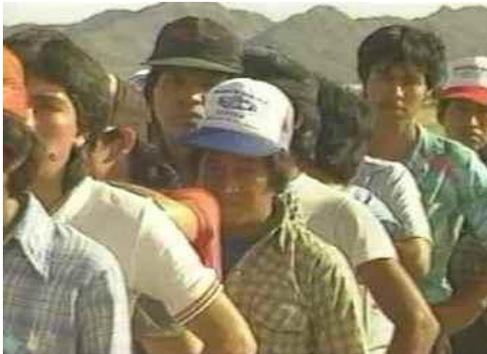
Why is this Important?

- Because if you are doing outreach with the Latino Community (and other ethnic groups with undocumented residents) this issue will come up and can hinder your efforts if you don't address it properly.
- Because it should be clear that transplantation is not denied because of immigration status, but because of lack of access to insurance.



Why is this Important?

- Because there are 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
- Because there is an ethical debate about their opportunity to give but not to receive.
- Because we need to be able to turn the discussion back on point – **if people truly want to help their community, they need to register as donors.**



When Undocumented Patients go to the Media

- San Francisco - An undocumented resident found a potential kidney donor in his wife, but the Hospital suddenly would not perform surgery – he claimed – because he was undocumented. After a media storm, the transplant proceeded.
- New York - A waiter who was undocumented and had no insurance went to the media claiming his status stopped him from getting a transplant. After the media attention, he got a transplant through a charity fund at a Hospital.

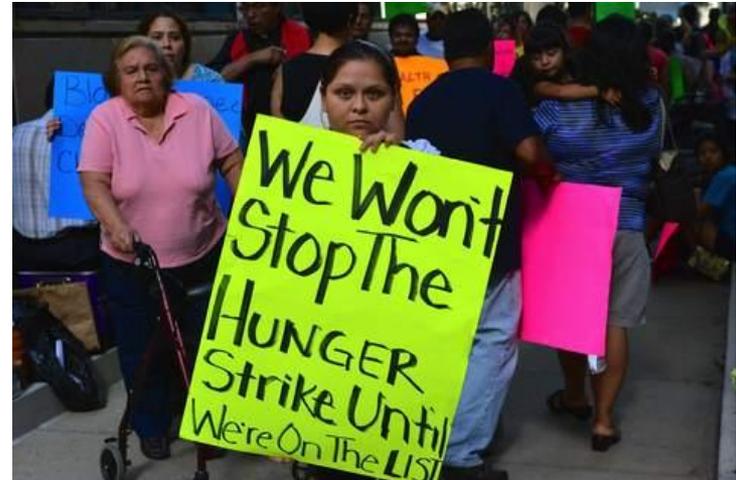
Are YOU prepared should stories like these break in your DSA?

Chicago

- At community events, undocumented immigrants are upset they cannot register to be donors on the Illinois State Registry (*linked to the Secretary of State Office, not the DMV, requires an ID or Drivers License*)
- **Case 1:** Undocumented immigrant dies without next of kin available. OPO follows procedures and after decline from friends, stops process. Local activists mobilize, even *though he never became a donor*, picketing in front of hospital with signs saying “OPO takes organs from the undocumented!” Front page news.

Chicago

- **Case 2:** This summer, 20 undocumented uninsured patients went on a hunger strike arguing that they are being denied a transplant solely because their immigration status. Front page news. OPO foresees repercussions when working with the Latino community. Leader forms non-profit activist organization.



Los Angeles

- “Noche de Celebración 2012” celebrated the collaboration between OneLegacy, Done Vida California and the Mexican Consulate.
- The following day, a well known newspaper in Mexico published a critique stating Consulate was “pressuring” Mexicans to register as donors, while they themselves cannot receive transplants.
- Mexican Consul became wary of holding the event again. Rebuilding partnership with new Consul.



Georgia

- OPO visited the Mexican Consulate twice a week for years. After change in leadership, OPO was notified they were no longer welcome because there is no public insurance offered to undocumented immigrants that would allow them to obtain a transplant.
- The OPO was able to start the weekly visits several months later after showing proof that Mexican nationals residing and working in Georgia had obtained transplants.



Knowledge is Essential

Are you prepared to answer the following?

- Can undocumented immigrants register in your state?
- Can undocumented immigrants receive a transplant in your state?
- Can undocumented immigrants access public insurance programs to obtain a transplant in your state ?
- Does your state cover dialysis for undocumented immigrants?
- Make data work for you. How many Hispanics have received a transplant in your state? (OPTN has data readily available)

Snapshot of Support by State

Informal survey among AMAT LWG members conducted in Q3 2013 to ascertain available benefits/assistance for transplantation for undocumented immigrants.

	YES	NO
Do undocumented Immigrants have access/are able to receive public/state benefits for organ transplantation?	IL (only up to 19 yo), CA, NY	NV, GA, TX, PR
Do undocumented immigrants have access to public/state funding to receive dialysis treatments?	IL, CA, NY	NV, GA, TX, PR
Do hospitals in your state provide charity transplant services/assistance to undocumented immigrants who need organ transplants?	*IL, *CA, NY	NV, GA, TX, PR
* Occasionally/depending on circumstances		

The Bottom Line...

- 6,570 people will die this year because they didn't receive a transplant in time
- There simply aren't enough donors to save all the children, men and women waiting
- The rules are in place for a reason – some have changed and others are in review
- Due to the cost of transplants lack of medical coverage is not an option for anyone, regardless of their immigration status
- The message we reinforce is clear: if you truly wish to help your community, **register as a donor!**

Thank You!

Questions?

