

Wife to get cornea from dead spouse

Kyodo News

The wife of a man who died last week will receive one of his corneas in the first case of a family member being given priority for a transplant under the revised organ transplant law, the Japan Eye Bank Association said Saturday.

The man named his wife, who suffers from corneal herpes and has been on a waiting list for a cornea transplant, as the recipient in April on his donor registration card, the Tokyo-based umbrella body said. It did not identify the two, only saying they were both in their 50s.

The man died of stomach cancer at St. Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo at 5:30 p.m. Friday and his eyeballs were both extracted that night. One will be transplanted to his wife on Monday or later and another given to a third person if the organs clear tests such as for infection, it said.

Health ministry guidelines did not permit designation of organ recipients under the original organ transplant law enforced in 1997, but the law was revised in July last year.

Now it allows priority donations among family members. Under the revised law, which took effect in January, the scope is limited to between parents and children and husbands and wives.

About 1 million people are registered with eye banks as potential donors, and about 1,000 actually donated in fiscal 2008, resulting in roughly 1,500 transplant cases.

About 2,600 people were on waiting lists at eye banks as of March 31.

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