

Brain-dead boy's organs to be harvested

Kyodo News

A boy aged under 15 has been declared brain-dead with family consent for the first time in Japan, with the child's organs to be harvested for transplantation shortly, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry said Tuesday.

The ministry identified the child only as a boy aged between 10 and 15 who had been admitted to a hospital in the Kanto-Koshinetsu region, which covers Tokyo and its surrounding prefectures.

This paves the way for surgeons to extract the boy's organs and transplant them into patients for the first time since the revised organ transplant law took effect last July.

Under the revised law, organs can be taken from anyone regardless of their age with family consent, unless the individual in question has explicitly refused to be a donor.

But if the donor is aged under 18, a panel that looks into cases of child abuse at the hospital where the patient was admitted needs to confirm that the donor did not fall victim to abuse.

The Japan Organ Transport Network, the only entity certified as an intermediary for organ transplants in the country, said the boy's relatives have agreed to the extraction of his heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small intestines for transplant.

The network also said the boy's organs are expected to be removed in an operation beginning Wednesday morning.

The boy, who had suffered heavy head injuries in a road accident, was pronounced brain-dead at around 7:37 a.m. Tuesday.

The network said it would select recipients of the organs from a waiting list of patients later Tuesday.

The donor's family issued a statement saying that it has come to the conclusion that the use of his body for those who can survive through organ transplants would match the boy's own hope for life, the network said.

The boy's relatives have asked the network not to identify the hospital in the Kanto-Koshinetsu region, where he had been admitted. The region covers Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama, Ibaraki, Gunma, Tochigi prefectures, Yamanashi, Nagano and Niigata prefectures.

Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Ritsuo Hosokawa told a news conference Tuesday that the ministry would watch developments carefully, noting it would be the first case of organ transplants involving someone under age 15.

The Japan Times: Wednesday, April 13, 2011
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