



The United Church of Canada General Council

GCE Animal-to-Human Transplants (2002A535)

True Document Date

January 3, 2002

1. Prohibition on Animal-to-Human Transplants and Clinical Trials

WHEREAS animal to human organ and tissue transplantation poses significant risks both to transplant patients and to society at large – including the possibility of new diseases crossing the species barrier and causing future epidemics, and,

WHEREAS the quality of life for animal-to-human organ transplant recipients is likely to be much lower than those receiving transplants from human donors, and,

WHEREAS the cost of xenotransplants will be very costly, putting additional strains on our public health care system,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive of the General Council of the United Church of Canada:

Support a complete and immediate prohibition on animal-to-human organ and tissue transplantation, including any proposals to begin human clinical trials. It is to be noted that such procedures as heart valves and temporary skin grafts do not have their own blood supply and do not raise issues of rejection by the recipient, and therefore, are in a different category in terms of risk, and are not subject to this prohibition.

2. Supporting Alternatives to Animal-to-Human Transplants

WHEREAS viable alternatives exist to xenotransplantation – both in the immediate and long-term that could more effectively address the shortage of organs and tissues for transplant with significantly fewer risks and costs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive of the General Council, through the appropriate units and courts of the United Church:

- a. Advocate for a more effective donor registry or card program, ensuring that donor consent is indicated directly on health cards;
- b. Actively solicit participation in the organ donor registry or card program at a congregational level;
- c. Advocate for a national publicity/educational campaign in support of organ donations, living wills, and instruction to proxy or substitute decision makers, as well as for education in schools on organ donation;
- d. Advocate for preventative health measures, aimed at reducing the need for organ and tissue transplants;
- e. Advocate for programs designed to train teams of health professionals to counsel the families of potential organ donors;
- f. Encourage the study of changes to the current legislative framework for organ donations that might further facilitate organ tissue donations.

3. Research

WHEREAS animal-to-human organ and tissue transplantation poses significant risks both to transplant patients and to society at large – including the possibility of new diseases crossing the species barrier and causing future epidemics, and,

WHEREAS the quality of life for animal-to-human organ transplant recipients is likely to be much lower than those receiving transplants from human donors, and

WHEREAS the cost of xenotransplantation research is very high, uses valuable scientific resources, and could in itself introduce unacceptable risks related to cross-species disease transmission, and,

WHEREAS viable alternatives exist – both in the immediate and long-term – that could more effectively address the shortage of organs and tissues for transplant with significantly fewer risks and costs,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive of General Council:

- a. Call for increased funding for medical research into alternative ways of addressing the organ transplant shortage, particularly research seeking ways to expand the potential pool of human organs available for transplant.
- b. Call for the suspension of both government and corporate funding – direct and indirect – for xenotransplantation research.

Report Linkage (This is already on the web but needs to be linked to social policy and should be linked to the report on Xenotransplantation.)

Document Type: [Social Policy](#)

General Council: [GC43 or earlier](#)

Originating Body: [General Council Executive](#)