

Tissue Donation Update December 2020

Deceased Tissue Donation

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on tissue donation potential and the referral rate of potential donors has dropped significantly (~50%) from pre COVID-19 levels due to the pressures on the NHS at large as we experience a second wave of the virus. The number of potential donors confirmed as being suitable for tissue donation, i.e. no risk of transmitting SARS-CoV-2, is low due to the need to confirm that potential deceased donors are negative for the virus on an upper respiratory swab prior to proceeding with donation.

SNBTS have distributed 1700 Tissue Donation ID cards with information on the main contraindications for donation and directions for how to make a referral to all Emergency Department clinical staff in October 2020 to stimulate referrals.

Between August and mid-November 2020 there were a total of five tissue donors, two of whom had also donated organs first. Of these five donors, the two organ donors donated three heart valves and the remaining three tissue only donors donated a further four heart valves and six tendons. Two further multi organ donors donated heart valves which were processed by NHS Blood & Transplant due to operational reasons.

Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service has agreed a contract with NHS Blood & Transplant Tissues and Eye Services to provide a funded stand alone eye retrieval service for NHS boards within the central belt of Scotland. Initial plans to launch early in 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic however the service went live on 14 October 2020 and is available Monday – Friday 9AM -5PM. To date SNBTS has had 11 referrals and retrieved 5 pairs of eyes from four NHS Boards.

Pancreatic Islet Programme

The SNBTS Islet Isolation Lab continued to process pancreata for clinical transplantation throughout the pandemic although the number of transplants being taken forward continues to be reduced due to concerns re the safety of recipients (due to the need for immunosuppression) during the pandemic.

Between August 2020 and mid-November 2020, 4 pancreata were processed by SNBTS and all yielded a successful transplantable product by SNBTS release criteria, leading to a transplant on 3 occasions. One of these was not transplanted because there was insufficient yield for that patient with no alternative potential recipients available at the time.

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