

Testing knowledge of eye donation: a survey of intensive care nurses

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Corneal transplantation is a sight restoring procedure that enhances the recipient's quality of life. Most deceased patients in Intensive Care Units (ICU) are potential eye donors, but the number of referrals from this group remains low. Understanding how nurses view eye donation and identifying their educational needs is vital in order to increase donation rates while offering choice to patients and families.

Purpose: To assess nurses' knowledge about the identification and referral of potential eye donors.

Materials and methods: An online, 18-item, questionnaire survey assessing the knowledge, training and views towards eye donation was emailed to 100 ICU nurses working in a tertiary NHS Trust. Fifty-eight percent (n=58/100) of nurses completed the questionnaire.

Results: The majority of nurses (n=50/58) could not identify the medical contraindications to eye donation, just one was aware of the referral process and only two reported that they received previous

training on eye donation. Overall, participants were in agreement that corneal transplants improve the recipients' quality of life (n= 50/58) and that offering eye donation should be considered as part of end-of-life care (n=43/58). However, only seven felt confident raising the subject with relatives.

Conclusion: ICU nurses play a pivotal role identifying and discussing the potential for donation. However, the results of this survey showed that the majority of responding nurses lacked knowledge, training and confidence to effectively undertake this role. Therefore there is a need for educational programmes that focus on eye donation and communication skills to be able to offer the choice to patients and families. There is also a scope for research to evaluate the efficacy of educational programmes and their impact on donation rates.

Key words: Corneal donation, tissue donation, attitudes, views, knowledge, intensive care, nurses

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