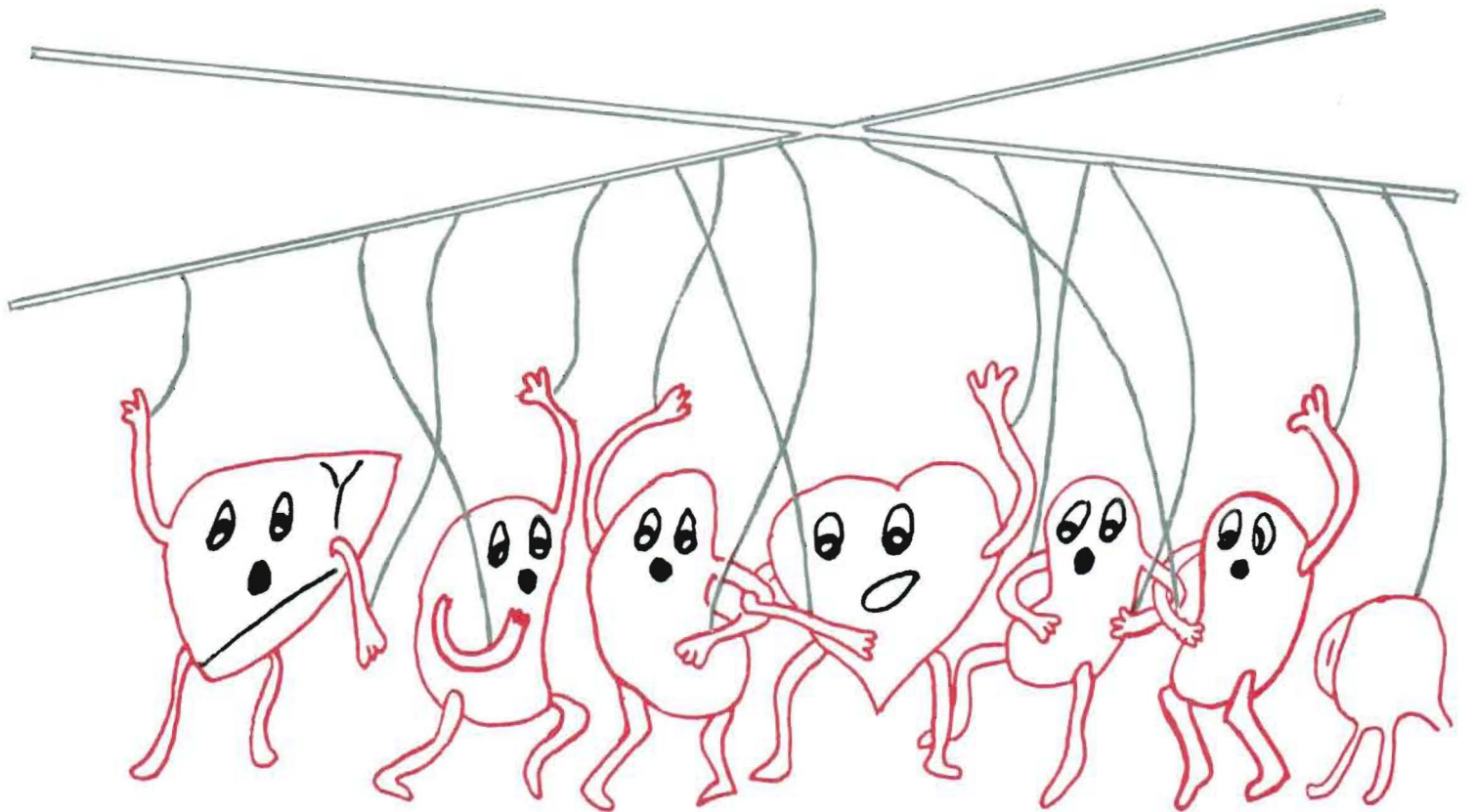


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# THE CO-ORDINATOR



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# Public Education for Organ Donation: Do You Have What it Takes?

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We have all been through it. We have waited with great anticipation for the day to come, when an expert on a topic of great interest will be in our midst. We have read her publications and now wish to partake of her vast knowledge. She steps up to the podium and opens her mouth to speak. Her slides are overcrowded and disorganized. There is no apparent framework to assist with the flow of ideas and despite the fact that there appears to be a great deal of information there, you are just not receiving it. The truth is now apparent - your expert is a lousy speaker and should stick to writing.

Another common scenario is the expert who is an excellent lecturer - when speaking to peers. Put him in front of a lay audience and he simply does not know how to change gears. His lecture is liberally sprinkled with medical jargon and acronyms and his jokes, although they probably got quite a laugh from his house staff, go right over the heads of the audience. They cannot wait until he steps down.

Public education for organ donation is a vital component of the transplantation process. Without community support, comprehension and co-operation there would be no organs to transplant. Transplant Coordinators throughout Canada and around the world, with their intimate knowledge of the organ donation process are ideal candidates to disseminate information to the public. And this, in fact, is often a significant part of the job for which they were hired. However, not everyone is a born speaker and, expertise in the area of transplant co-ordination does not guarantee a scintillating speaker.

There is hope. For those Transplant Co-ordinators who find

their speaking needs improvement, as well as for individuals new to the position, a few simple steps can vastly improve their presentations.

## Program Preparation

Using an organized approach to the process, you the Transplant Coordinator can develop a framework to be fleshed out using the knowledge and expertise that you already have. Before beginning preparation of the program, time should be taken to consider the factors which motivate people to learn about a topic. Readiness of individuals to learn about any subject, especially a health-related one, is significantly dependant upon their motivation. Understanding the motivators allows you to direct your comments in that direction during your presentation.

In discussing organ donation, the Coordinator must be aware that motivation to donate is usually dependant upon two factors:

1. Altruism;
2. Desire for Immortality.

While health professionals may be convinced of the importance of organ donation because it leads to a high standard of medical practice, the general public will not. Their motivator will be considerably more internal. Thus, the tone and direction of the educational program ought to be guided by possible motivators for learning within that particular audience.

The first step in preparation of an educational program is the decision about what needs to be accomplished with this target group. Overall, the goal must be to convince this audience of the high value of organ donation, to the point where each individual will take positive action on that conviction.

How one goes about accomplishing this constitutes the design of the program and this might vary depending upon the members of the audience. Before speaking to any group the following questions should be asked:

1. What is the general age, sex, educational level and occupation of the members of the group?
2. If these people belong to a community group, what is the purpose of the group;
3. How many people will be in attendance?
4. What prompted their request for a program on organ donation?

The answers to these questions will provide valuable information in a number of areas, among these are:

1. Where to begin.
2. What level of language should be used.
3. What method of delivery would be most appropriate.

After examining the audience and the overall goal, the next step is to begin to think about the content of the presentation and the specific objectives that need to be met. Many new speakers feel that program objectives are superfluous. This is unfortunate for the audience. It will be painfully apparent that there were no objectives developed prior to preparation of the presentation. Obviously, there are many issues and concerns in the area of organ and tissue donation that could be addressed. However, it would be rather unlikely that you would have the time to address all of the issues. What this means, is that a decision must be made about which pieces of information are most appropriate and useful, with respect to meeting the goal you have set. Thus, the objectives.

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## Do You Have What it Takes? continued

Table I is a sample outline of a program that could be applied to any number of community groups. It is vitally important that the preparation of the lecture be initiated with an outline. For the audience the outline provides structure and flow. For the presenter the outline provides a skeleton on which to hang the knowledge and thus, often allows the speaker to present with very little use of notes. The speaker must always remember to tell the audience at the beginning what is planned and at the end to summarize what has been accomplished.

**Table 1**

The Public's Role in Organ Donation  
Suggested Outline

I. Why is Organ Donation an Important Issue?

II. Who Can be an Organ/Tissue Donor?

III. What Happens when Consent is Given for Organ Donation?

IV How Can You Become an Organ Donor?

### Implementing the Program

The major stumbling block for many Coordinators faced with a presentation, even on a topic they know as well as this, is the thought of actually getting up in front of the audience and delivering the speech. Transplant Coordinators are not alone in this fear. It has been reported that on a list of fourteen different fears, speaking before a group is the number one fear of many Canadians.<sup>1</sup> There are only four basic methods for delivering a speech:

1. Word by word reading of a manuscript.
2. Recitation of a memorized manuscript
3. Speaking impromptu.
4. Speaking extemporaneously.<sup>2</sup>

The first two methods require that a complete manuscript be written first. Having that manuscript in view often helps the inexperienced speaker. However, it can be difficult

to ensure that the speech does not sound stilted or monotonous. Trying to memorize a speech can add to the anxiety because the speaker now has the added pressure of making sure the words are correct.

Speaking extemporaneously requires only that there be a solid outline. A speaker who knows the subject well may find this is the easiest approach. Inexperienced speakers should probably not speak impromptu, i.e., without benefit of any preparation.

The best way to decrease nervousness when making a presentation is to know the subject well and to make a good visual impression. It is important to look confident and relaxed, even when you do not feel that way.

Inevitably the program on a topic such as organ donation will generate questions. Audiences will often want clarification of points made or wish to ask a question regarding a situation they may have encountered. This last type of question can be difficult to approach because rarely are all the facts available. It is best to answer generally, reiterate related points and gracefully decline to speculate. Above all, when answering questions following a presentation, defensiveness should be avoided at all costs.

Making the actual presentation, may be the most anxiety-provoking part in offering to take centre stage. However, practice in this case does make perfect, or at least easier.

### Conclusion

Public speaking is a two way street. Obviously, the audience should benefit from the presentation, but the speaker will also benefit in a number of ways. Increased confidence will result and the speaker will become more attuned to the concerns and the responses of the audience with regard to the topic.

Public education for organ donation is vitally important. Anyone making a presentation on the topic of organ donation for transplantation is really attempting to move the audience from unawareness of the issue, to a point close to having each member of the audience at a point where he or she could actually disseminate information to others. If the Coordinator can move the audience in this direction she has made a successful presentation.

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