

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Overview**

The Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) commissioned Navigator Ltd. to conduct a benchmarking survey of Ontario attitudes towards organ and tissue donation. The survey was designed to inform TGLN's regular review of the public opinion landscape by exploring Ontario's donation intentions, awareness of the donation process and information needs.

A telephone survey of 603 respondents was conducted from March 23, 2004 to March 29, 2004. The survey was conducted using a random digit dialling technique with a proportionate province-wide sample. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of 3.99%, 19 times out of 20.

## **Ontarians are Strong Supporters of Organ Donation**

A strong majority of Ontarians (77%) indicate they are willing to donate their own organs for transplant purposes. A majority (66%) of Ontarians indicate that they would be likely to consent to donating a family member's organs even if they were unsure of the family member's donation wishes. An overwhelming majority (94%) are either *very likely* (85%) or *somewhat likely* (8%) to donate a family member's organs when they are aware of the family member's desire to be a donor.

## **Most Ontarians Have Direct Experience with the Topic of Organ Donation**

A growing number of Ontarians (38%) believe they understand the details of organ donation and more than two out of three Ontarians are interested in learning more (69%).

Most Ontarians have some type of personal experience with Organ donation. The survey asked Ontarians about possible types of experience associated with organ donation including:

- Signing an organ donor card,
- Having a family discussion,
- Telling a family member about your wish to donate or not,
- Having a family member tell you about their wish to donate or not
- Current awareness of organ donation issues and desire to learn more

Just over half of the province (53%) report having signed an organ donor card. Just under half (45%) of those who have not signed an organ donor card claim they would be willing to do so.

Ontarians are virtually unanimous (96%) in their belief that it is important to tell their families whether or not they would want their organs to be donated after death. However, only 44% report actually having a family discussion. There is no particular barrier to family discussion. Most of those who have not had such a discussion just never had an occasion to talk about organ donation. While 37% of all discussions end up with all participants deciding to donate, only 2% end up with all participants deciding not to donate.

Over half of Ontarians (55%) say they have told their family of their wish to donate their organs. Only 7% say they have told their families they do not wish to be an organ donor. 44% say that family members have indicated their wish to donate their own organs. Just 14% say a family member has indicated their wish not to be a donor.

### **Ontarians Understand Donation Need and Transplant Success**

85% of Ontarians would accept an organ transplant if they had a life-threatening disease that could only be treated with a transplant.

Using a scale of 1-10, where 1 is *not at all successful* and 10 is *extremely successful*, Ontarians were asked to indicate what they believe to be the level of success for organ transplants. The average score is 7.1, indicating that most Ontarians believe that organ transplants are successful.

Using the same scale to measure perceptions of the level of need for organ transplants where a score of 1 indicates *no need at all* and a score of 10 indicates *an extremely great need*, the average score is 8.9. Ontarians understand the great need for organ transplants.

### **Real Potential to Expand Living Donor Base**

According to March 2004 research there is real potential to expand the base of living donors. Almost all respondents (93%) agree that you can be a living donor and live an active life. When asked about their willingness to be a living donor, 95% of respondents say they would be likely to donate to a family member. However, less than 1 in 5 have had a family discussion about living donation with their family.

The vast majority of Ontarians (86%) have not received any information about living donors from their workplace. However, a majority (59%) say they would be interested in receiving general information about organ donation in the workplace. The same percentage would be interested to hear about or about benefits and job protection for living donors (59%).

Just about two-thirds of Ontarians claim they would be more likely to become a living donor if their jobs were protected and lost wages compensated. Whether government or the employer provides benefits, protecting employment and compensation for lost wages does appear to have the potential to boost living donor organ donations.

## **Tissue Donation**

Only about half of the Ontario population has ever heard anything about tissue donation, and of those who have, only 28% have specifically discussed tissue donation with their family. There is little distinction drawn between different types of tissue. Just over half of respondents (52%) are very likely to donate eyes, skin, heart valves or bone.

### **1 in 10 Have Heard Recent News on Organ and Tissue Donation**

Three in ten Ontarians (30%) have recently heard something about organ and tissue donation. However, there was little recall of specific content as the most frequent response to the question of what respondents had read, seen or heard was an information source.

### **For Those who Have Heard of TGLN, Favourable Impressions Reign**

Just under half of Ontarians are under the impression that an organization exists to coordinate donation activity in Ontario.

While the Trillium Gift of Life Network name is only currently recognized by 39% of Ontarians, impressions are overwhelmingly favourable. Of those aware of TGLN, 83% have a favourable impression of the organization and only 0.5% claim an unfavourable impression.

### **Ontarians Trust Doctors Most for Donation Information**

When it comes to the list of potential spokespeople for Trillium, doctors garner the most trust. 94% of Ontarians trust family doctors as a credible source on organ and tissue donation. 90% extend that trust to doctors in a hospital as well. However, most alternative spokespersons enjoy strong credibility ratings in the 80 percent range.