

Join the national conversation!

HOW SHOULD DOCTORS CHOOSE RECIPIENTS FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTS?

Word Generation - Unit 3.18

Focus Words

intrinsic | commodity | practitioner | evaluate | infer



WEEKLY PASSAGE

In 2001, Tadamasa Goto came to the United States for a liver transplant at UCLA Medical Center. The transplant saved his life. Goto returned to Japan, where he leads a Yakuza gang called the Goto-gumi. His gang is said to engage in theft, blackmail, assault, and even murder. Many people were shocked and angry to hear that Goto had received a new liver. Healthy organs are a valuable **commodity**. Each year, thousands of Americans die waiting for organ transplants.

Goto did not break any rules to obtain the liver. In the United States, healthy organs are given to the sickest people, not the people who have waited the longest. Still, some people feel that the hospital should have denied Goto a new liver because of his criminal activities. Other people believe organs should not go to non-Americans. American taxpayers help fund American hospitals, and some people believe that these hospitals should help Americans first.

There are also those who think that the hospital acted correctly. They believe Goto has the same rights as any other patient. They do not want medical **practitioners** to **evaluate** whether

patients are good or bad people. Many religions and belief systems say that each person has **intrinsic** value, no matter who they are or what they have done. Doctors try to honor this intrinsic value by treating all sick people, even criminals, with equal care and respect.

Additionally, people who support Goto's transplant remind us that no one can accurately predict how a person will act in the future. While we might **infer** from Goto's past behavior that he may continue his criminal activities, no one knows for sure. Although some people believe that helping him live longer will just allow Goto to hurt more people, others say that he could repent and become a law-abiding person.

Interestingly, people born outside the United States donate about 20% of the UCLA medical center's healthy organs. According to a UCLA doctor, denying transplants to foreigners could discourage these donations. About 95% of the hospital's healthy organs are given to Americans.

What do you think? How should doctors decide who gets healthy organs?

How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

commodity : (noun) something that is bought and sold

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

practitioner : (noun) person who practices a profession

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

evaluate : (verb) to decide the value or worth of

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

intrinsic : (adjective) essential or natural to something

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

infer : (verb) to guess, with some evidence for

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?



PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Option 1: Human organs are a valuable **commodity**. Many people need a new heart, liver, or kidney to live. When an organ becomes available, medical **practitioners** must **evaluate** which patients would be good hosts. This process is based on the belief that each person has **intrinsic** value; the goal is to save as many lives as possible.

As of December 24, 2009, there were one hundred five thousand six hundred thirty-nine people waiting for organ transplants. Which answer shows this number written in standard form?

- A) 105,693
- B) 105,693,000
- C) 105,639
- D) 106,593

Option 2: Some people think that valuable **commodities** like human hearts and livers that are donated to American hospitals should all go to American patients. Since U.S. dollars fund the hospitals, these people **infer** that the hospitals should help only Americans. Some other people find the idea of turning away foreign patients who need organs shocking. Is a sick French, Mexican, or Nigerian child worth less than a sick American child? Don't hospitals have an **intrinsic** duty to help everyone they can, regardless of where patients come from? One medical **practitioner** at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) medical center says that helping foreign patients actually benefits Americans. **Evaluate** the following:

Foreigners donate about 20% of the organs transplanted at UCLA's medical center. About 95% of all organs transplanted go to Americans. If UCLA stopped offering organs to foreign patients, people from other countries might stop donating their organs to UCLA. Based on these percentages, what could we expect to happen to the number of organs available for transplant if UCLA only served American patients?

Math Discussion Question: Since there are not enough organs to go around, some people get new organs while others die waiting for them. Doctors **evaluate** which patients have the best chance of survival. They try to save as many lives as they can. However, in developing countries like Bangladesh, Haiti, and Ethiopia, **commodities** like clean water and medicine can be just as scarce, and just as important, as a heart or kidney. **Practitioners** of all the world's major religions believe that all people have **intrinsic** worth. Some people **infer** from this that we should help people when we can. A heart can save someone's life, but so can \$5 for antibiotics. Is making decisions about who gets organs similar to making decisions about giving money to organizations that help poor people survive, like Oxfam or The Red Cross, or is it different?

How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?

THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY



Students in Mr. Seemy's class were reading about the human excretory system. They learned that kidneys filter waste products out of the blood. The waste is combined with water and expelled from the body as urine. People whose kidneys fail must either have trained medical **practitioners** filter their blood with expensive "dialysis machines" or else get a kidney transplanted from someone else's body. "My uncle has diabetes," said Manvi, "and one of his kidneys is beginning to fail. Everyone in my mother's family is **evaluating** whether they can donate a kidney to my uncle. His daughter, my cousin Pritti, may donate one of her kidneys for the transplant—I think her kidney might be a good match because they're so closely related."

Mr. Seemy said, "Kidneys aren't a **commodity** that can be made in a factory and sold at some sort of human parts store. They're not all alike. The donor and recipient must have the same blood type and similar kidney tissue. You're right to **infer** that daughters and fathers, like your cousin and uncle, are more likely than unrelated people to have matching blood type and tissues."

"Pritti has thought seriously about the decision and created a chart of all the pluses and minuses," said Manvi. "I'll check with Pritti to see if she'd be okay with me showing it to the class."

→ A few days later, Manvi presented the chart that Pritti had created to help her decide about donating her kidney to her father:

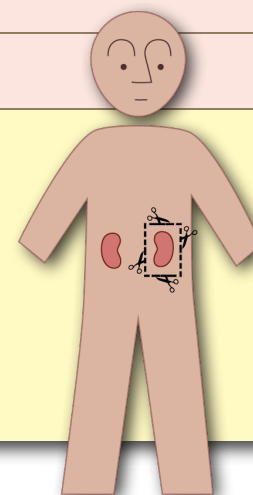
Pros and Cons of Donating a Kidney

Benefits and Rewards of Donating a Kidney	Possible Problems and Costs of Donating a Kidney
With a kidney transplant, my dad will probably live 3 to 15 years longer. During those years he won't need to use a dialysis machine every day.	Surgery is intrinsically risky. During the surgery, I will receive general anesthesia so I'll be "knocked out" and won't feel pain. There is always a very small chance that the anesthesia drugs could kill me. (But the chance is so small that it doesn't worry me.)
People are born with two kidneys, but they only need one, so I'll be as healthy as ever.	If my one remaining kidney is damaged, I won't have a backup, so I'll have to go onto a dialysis machine or I'll need a transplant myself!
After recovering from surgery, I can continue to work, play volleyball, and dance, just like I do now.	I won't be able to play any contact sports. I used to play lacrosse, but I don't any more. So this is only a small issue.
I won't have to pay for the surgery. My father's health insurance will pay for that. Thank goodness we have insurance.	It will take me about 5 days to recover from the surgery. The company I work for may not pay for those sick days. If they don't, I will lose about \$1,000 in pay.
Both my father's and my blood type are Type A+. We have 4 matching tissue "antigens," which means there is a very good chance that my kidney will not be rejected by my father's immune system. The Mayo Clinic reports that after 3 years, kidneys from family members have an 80% success rate.	A six-antigen tissue match is considered perfect, and we don't have that. Even if we did, we could go through the whole transplant process and my father's body could reject my kidney. It would be terribly disappointing to go through so much and then have it all fail.
I love my father! There's intrinsic value in helping the people we love.	

✍ Do you think creating a list of "pros and cons," or "benefits and costs," is a helpful way to evaluate the factors of an important decision like donating a kidney?

✍ What other items would you add to the "benefits" column? What would you add to the "costs" column?

✍ What items in Pritti's lists would you value differently? For example, you might put greater emphasis on not being able to play a contact sport if you enjoyed playing football.



How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?

DEBATING THE ISSUE



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

The hospital should have denied treatment to Tadamasa Goto. Livers are a scarce commodity, and foreign criminals should not get organs before Americans who obey the law.

B

The hospital should have denied treatment to Tadamasa Goto. We can infer from Goto's past actions that he will continue to hurt people in the future.

C

It was right for the hospital to give Tadamasa Goto a new liver. All sick people deserve equal care and respect.

D

It was right for the hospital to give Tadamasa Goto a new liver. Doctors should not make medical decisions based on inferences about whether patients are good or bad people.

E

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

intrinsic | commodity | practitioner | evaluate | infer

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.