

# Active organ donation in two hospitals only

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

**New Delhi:** The organ collection unit of the country's premier hospital is in the lurch. In the past five years, the Organ Retrieval and Banking Organisation (ORBO) at AIIMS—a national nodal centre—has not received a single organ through any private or state-run hospital. The Army hospital and AIIMS are the only active centres for organ retrieval in Delhi. These, too, see very few donations compared to the number of accidental deaths reported in the city.

On World Organ Donation Day—celebrated in India for the first time on Saturday—experts called for changes in the law coupled with a massive awareness campaign to meet the high demand so that precious lives could be saved everyday. "We have received about 780 organs and tissue through donations. Most of these have come from AIIMS Trauma Centre or patients who were admitted at the institute and some from the Army Research and Referral Hospital. In the past five years, no donations have been received from private and other hospitals," said a senior official, who did not wish to be named. In Delhi, many hospitals such as G B Pant Hospital, Apollo Hospital, Fortis Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital have facilities for transplantation of vital human organs, including the heart valve, kidney, liver and eyes. Many patients, however, continue to suffer as a result of the lack of donors.

"Delhi reports over 2,000 accident deaths every year. Most of the incidents involve middle-aged persons and youth. These persons are most suitable as there is rarely any medical contraindication such as cancer or tuberculosis. But people do not come forward due to lack of awareness and religious considerations. According to the law, even if a person has pledged to donate his body after death organs can't be retrieved if the family objects. We should introduce the concept of 'presumed consent' in which everybody is considered a donor after death unless he/she has opted out of it," said Dr Sudhir Gupta, associate professor, forensic medicine and toxicology, AIIMS. He added that it should be mandatory for hospitals to declare all brain deaths and register these with an online organ directory.

Said Dr Anupam Sibal, medical director, Apollo hospitals, "We have carried out some organ retrievals at our hospital. But it is difficult. Family members are not even ready to accept the death. We need to create more awareness among people and there has to be legal security for doctors."

Pushpa Singh, group transplant coordinator of Fortis hospitals, said, "To announce a patient brain dead and retrieve organs, there is a chain of procedures. A committee of medical experts has to certify the brain death and the patient has to be kept on ventilator support till retrieval process starts. But first, the family has to agree."

NEW DELHI

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DRUG TOP

PREITY ZINTA PIPS DALAI LAMA TO  
ASSADOR  
SH 13

TIMES CITY

## Wonder boy wants to be doc

### 13-Year-Old First To Undergo Paediatric Liver Transplant

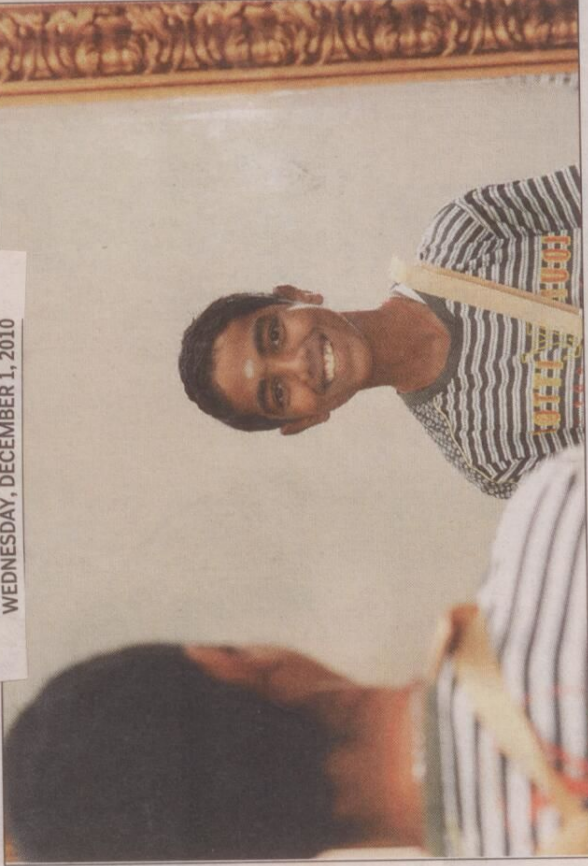
Risha Chittiangia | TNN

**New Delhi:** His story has been a source of inspiration and hope for scores of liver failure patients—mostly children suffering from biliary atresia—and has prompted them to go for liver transplant. India's first paediatric liver transplant patient, 13-year-old K Shakti Kandhaswamy, aspires to become a doctor.

Born with biliary atresia, a rare congenital defect in which liver is completely damaged, Shakti underwent surgery just 62 days after birth. As his surgery was unsuccessful his parents were left with no option but to give their consent for liver transplant. "I had no hope that he will survive. I was more worried about my husband, who had donated a part of his liver," said S Thilaka, Shakti's mother.

His mother's fears were justified as there were no success stories to bolster her confidence. "We could not reassure her as our first paediatric liver transplant patient died within days of the transplant. Liver transplant was then in its nascent stages. Today, he is India's first paediatric liver transplant patient to have lived for 12 years and is still going strong," said

Anindya Chattopadhyay



**RARE SURGERY:** Shakti Kandhaswamy was operated just 62 days after birth

Dr Anupam Sibal, senior paediatric gastroenterologist, who has been treating Shakti since 1997.

From the time he was bereft of hope to the time he is assisted by his son in reading documents in English, Shakti's father, A Kandhaswamy, has come a long way and says he is proud of his decision to opt for liver transplant. "He is like any other kid of his age. He is self-reliant and does ev-

everything on his own. Life couldn't have been better than this," said Kandhaswamy. Shakti's only regret is that he can't play basketball or cricket like his friends. "I prefer to breathless if I run. I prefer to paint and watch television instead. As I want to live long I have to take care of myself and religiously take my medicines," said Shakti.

This young ambassador of liver transplant wants to be said Dr Sibal.