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[Aid / Disasters](#)

[Alcohol / Addiction / Illegal Drugs](#)

[Allergy](#)

[Alzheimer's / Dementia](#)

[Asthma](#)

[Autism](#)

[Bipolar](#)

[Blood Pressure](#)

[Breast Cancer](#)

[Breast Cancer \(Patient\)](#)

[Cardiovascular](#)

[Cholesterol](#)

[Diabetes](#)

[Depression](#)

[Diet](#)

[Epilepsy](#)

[Fertility](#)

[Flu](#)

[Food](#)

[Gastroenterology](#)

[Genetics](#)

[HIV](#)

[Hypertension](#)

[Infectious Disease](#)

[Integrative Medicine](#)

[Kidney](#)

[Lung](#)

[Mental Health](#)

[Men's Health](#)

[Nephrology](#)

[Neurology](#)

[Obstetrics](#)

[Oncology](#)

[Optics](#)

[Orthopedics](#)

[Osteoporosis](#)

[Pain Management](#)

[Pediatrics](#)

[Pharmacy](#)

[Preventive Medicine](#)

[Public Health](#)

[Radiology](#)

[Reproductive Health](#)

[Surgery](#)

[Tobacco Use](#)

[Vaccines](#)

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New figures released today by the BMA indicate that public support is growing for a system of presumed consent for organ donation1.

Key results from the YouGov survey2 include:

- 26% of respondents (over 1 in 4) said they were on the NHS Organ Donor Register
- 62% of respondents (around 3 in 5) said they would be willing to donate their organs for transplantation after their death
- 64% of respondents (around 2 in 3) said that the UK should move to a system of presumed consent for organ donation

In the last BMA survey on presumed consent which took place in 2004, 60% of respondents said they were in favour of moving to an 'opt-out' system for organ donation.

Dr Tony Calland, Chairman of the BMA's Medical Ethics Committee said today:

"These figures demonstrate that support amongst the public is growing for presumed consent. People have obviously been moved by stories they read in the papers about how individuals are given a second chance of life by receiving a donated organ. We need to build on this support to ensure that people understand that there will never be compulsion to donate. There will always be a choice and people who do not wish to donate will be free to opt out. Discussions with the family should also continue before donation takes place.

He added: "We know that many people who are willing to donate organs simply never get around to making their views known. We believe that the publicity that will precede the introduction of a new system will encourage people to think about their wishes and discuss them with their family. Those who do not wish to donate, for whatever reason, have the right to opt out and that wish must be respected. Surveys show that the majority of patients will not take this step and therefore the number of organs available for transplantation will increase."

Every year in the UK hundreds of people die because there are not enough organs available for transplantation. The BMA believes that moving to a system of presumed consent, where it is assumed that people are willing to donate their organs after death unless they opt out, combined with other reforms to the transplant infrastructure, would play an important part in improving the organ donation system so that more lives can be saved.

Dr Calland commented further: "The BMA is extremely pleased that the Health Secretary is now seriously considering this option and has asked the Organ Donation Task Force to investigate the issues. We hope the government will take note of the growing level of public support for this change."

1 This means adults who do not wish to donate their organs after their death would have to make their feelings known during their lifetime, i.e. consent would otherwise be presumed. Safeguards would be in place for people who do not wish to donate their organs or whose family would be seriously distressed if donation were to proceed.

2 The YouGov survey was carried out between 9 and 11 October 2007 in England, Wales and Scotland and sampled over 2,000 people over the age of 18, please [click here](#) to access the breakdown of figures.

<http://www.bma.org.uk>

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