

Project: UW Hospital and Organ Procurement Organization: Donations After Cardiac Death *

Purpose: Produce a verifiable and demonstrable increase in organ donations by developing a replicable, transferable, and feasible model for the implementation of donation after cardiac death protocols. Research helped identify baseline knowledge of barriers to and opportunities for DCD (donation after cardiac death) in local hospitals.

Result: The University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Organ Procurement Organization utilized the findings from the first study in two ways: (1) information learned about barriers, motivations, perceptions, etc., was integrated into personal interactions that staff had with various hospitals, certified requestors, and other key publics, and (2) a new brochure was developed and distributed to certified requestors that was based in most part on key findings from the initial study. The research and communications program achieved a high level of success: (1) A 23% increase in knowledge about DCD, (2) Negative perceptions about DCD showed a significant improvement from the baseline study as did overall support for DCD, (3) The number of hospitals with DCD protocols in place increased 300%, from eight to 24, and (4) The number of DCD donations increased from 12 to 26 (217%).

Summary of Research Stages

- **Knupp & Watson under the direction of Dr. Peltier completed a three-year study working with the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Organ Procurement Organization (UWHC-OPO).** The research project had four overriding objectives: (1) to assess the psychological needs and barriers within various target populations (donor families, certified donation requestors, health professionals, administrators, and other staff), (2) identify current levels of awareness and knowledge and to increase these levels over time, and most importantly, to (3) increase the number of hospitals with DCD protocols in place, and (4) increase the number of DCD recoveries, sub-objectives include.
- Of interest, using the principles of what has been termed “Internal Marketing,” the different research stages were designed to build internal support for DCD within organizations that already had a DCD protocol in place and for hospitals that did not. As we note later, the mere process of speaking with so many people throughout the UWHC-OPO’s territory by itself helped secure support for DCD. In many ways this notion of internal marketing, or building intra-organizational support, was a primary intervention of the project.
- **Advisory Committee:** A steering committee made up of a wide range of individuals including physicians, nurses, physician assistants, clergyman, social service workers, administrators, and donor families was formed to help build the framework of the research.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** A total of 85 interviews with physicians, nurses, administrators, clergy, social service personnel, physician assistants, and donor families were conducted. These key informant interviews helped identify key issues to address during the remaining research stages.
- **Focus Groups:** 16 statewide focus groups with the same target populations identified in the key informant interviews narrowed findings from the advisory committee and interviews. The focus groups included 110 individuals from the target groups.
- **Questionnaire:** A large-scale questionnaire was repeated in each of the three years to measure changes over time. The survey was distributed to all Certified Requestors in UWHC’s territory (1,100) and addressed a host of knowledge and attitudinal/perceptual issues regarding DCD.
- Survey findings were used to create DCD communication materials, personalized communication efforts, lecture-based presentations, and web site material. Specific attention was given to increasing knowledge about key DCD issues and to overcome negative perceptions. Two follow-up surveys completed over the span of 18 months were used to assess changes after the communication plan was implemented.
- As would be expected given that the DCD communications and brochure were provided after Study 1, the greatest changes were between Study 1 and Study 2. However, there were very few statistical changes between Study 2 and Study 3. As such, the changes occurred between Study 1 and Study 2 and were maintained through Study 3.

Testimonial: Dr. Peltier’s research acumen is very impressive and his work is of the utmost quality. Importantly, the three-year research project he supervised for us as Director of Research for Knupp & Watson had actionable recommendations and led to impressive results.

- Dr. Anthony M. D'Alessandro, Executive Director, Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics

* Dr. Peltier as Director of Research for Knupp & Watson.