

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

6.1.6 Anencephalic Newborns as Organ Donors

Permitting parents of an anencephalic newborn to donate their child's organs has been proposed as a way to increase the organ supply for pediatric transplantation.

However, organ donation in these circumstances also raises concerns, particularly about the accuracy of diagnosis and the potential implications for other vulnerable individuals who lack decision-making capacity and are not able to participate in decisions to donate their organs, although anencephalic newborns are thought to be unique among other brain-damaged beings because they lack past consciousness and have no potential for future consciousness.

In the context of prospective organ donation from an anencephalic newborn, physicians may ethically:

- (a) Provide ventilator assistance and other medical therapies that are necessary to sustain organ perfusion and viability until such time as a determination of death can be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.
- (b) Retrieve and transplant the organs of an anencephalic newborn only after such determination of death, and in accordance with ethics guidance for transplantation and for medical decisions for minors.

AMA Principles of Medical Ethics: I,III,V