

# More Americans Willing to Donate

*DLA survey reveals changing attitudes*

According to a new survey\* by Donate Life America (DLA), fewer than half of U.S. residents (43 percent) say they're undecided, reluctant or don't want to be a donor after their death. That's an improvement, since the number was 50 percent in DLA's survey last year. The survey also revealed respondents' reasons for registering as a donor as well as for not registering.

Among respondents who reported being registered donors, more than half (53 percent) said it was to help others in need. Among those who weren't registered, the most-common reason was not being sure they'd be acceptable donors (19 percent). The other two most-common reasons given were they hadn't decided (15 percent) and they wanted to keep their organs and be buried whole (8 percent).

The survey, supported by Astellas Pharma US Inc., also showed that some long-standing misperceptions still hold. For example, 61 percent think it's possible for a brain dead person to recover, and 52 percent thought that doctors may not try as hard to save their lives if the doctor knew they were a donor. Another 8 percent believed donation is against their religion.

## THE SYSTEM IS FAIR

"We are encouraged," said DLA president/CEO David Fleming, "by the increase in the number of people who believe the organ and tissue allocation system is fair." In 2004, only 20 percent thought it was fair, he explained, which increased in 2009 to 32 percent and in 2010 to 37 percent.

"Unfortunately," he added, "the number of people who believe it's possible for a brain dead person to recover from his or her injuries is also on the rise." The number of people who held that misperception in 2004 was 22 percent; in 2009, 26 percent; and in 2010, 28 percent. "Although a person can recover from a coma," Fleming said, "brain death is permanent, irreparable."

Past research has found that media may be partly to blame for misperceptions about donation. This year's survey, however, points to a possible *positive* effect from the TV drama, "Three Rivers." The cancelled show, which aired on CBS last fall, featured transplants from three points of view — doctors, donors and recipients.


Twelve percent of survey respondents had watched at least one episode, and of those, 58 percent said it made them feel more positive toward donation; only 2 percent said it made them feel more negative. *[Editor's note: Since this article was written, CBS has announced that it is bringing the show back for the 2010 summer season.]*

To encourage the entertainment industry to be part of the solution, on June 11 and 12 Donate Life Hollywood hosted its second annual film festival, recognizing and encouraging accurate and inspiring storylines about donation and transplantation.

## ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

The DLA's recent survey also revealed the following:

- Three fourths of adults (75 percent) want their donation wishes fulfilled regardless of family desires.
- More than three fourths of adults (78 percent) correctly realize there are more people in the United States who need transplants than the number of donated organs available.
- The number of African Americans who want to be donors has increased 10 percent from last year's survey (41 percent from 31 percent).
- Almost half (48 percent) incorrectly believe there is a black market in the United States in which people can buy or sell organs.
- Most adults (61 percent) believe TV shows and movies have a public responsibility to portray organ and tissue donation and transplantation in an accurate way. [U](#)

 To read DLA's survey results — or join your state's donor registry — visit Donate Life America's website, [donatelife.net](http://donatelife.net).

\*The online survey of 5,100 adults (100 from each state and Washington, D.C.) was fielded in January on behalf of DLA through Survey Sampling International. The aggregated nationwide data was weighted to reflect the relative proportion of the U.S. adult population in each state and was controlled to match the U.S. population as a whole on age, gender, education, income and ethnicity.