Assessing respiratory therapists' awareness of the organ donor referral criteria and attitudes toward organ donation.

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Abstract
Context-Respiratory therapists provide care for every potential organ donor but do not receive formal education regarding organ procurement. Objective-To assess the number of respiratory therapists who are aware of the organ donor referral criteria and their attitude toward organ donation before and after an organ procurement organization provided an educational course. Design-A retrospective analysis of surveys following an educational course. Setting-Hospital respiratory therapy departments within the Texas Organ Sharing Alliance northern region. Participants-Respiratory therapists who attended the educational course. Main Outcome Measure(s)-Measured outcomes were respiratory therapists' attitude scores before and after the organ procurement organization provided the educational course, the number of organ donor cases experienced during the respiratory therapists' careers, the unit(s) of the hospital in which the respiratory therapists worked, and the respiratory therapists' awareness of the organ donor referral criteria before the organ procurement organization provided the educational course. Results-Seventy-seven respiratory therapists were surveyed. Sixty-two respiratory therapists identified themselves as working in a critical care setting and 58% stated they were unaware of the donor referral criteria. Seventeen respiratory therapists reported their attitude toward organ donation improved with no perception decline. Using the Wilcoxon signed rank test for statistical analysis, the mean attitude score after the education course was significantly different at an alpha level of 0.05 (P<01) than the mean attitude score before the course. After the program, 98.7% of the respiratory therapists stated they would begin evaluating patients regarding the organ donor referral criteria before extubation.

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