

The human marketplace: The ethical and medical challenges of illicit organ trafficking

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The Human Marketplace: The Ethical and Medical Challenges of Illicit Organ Trafficking

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Major(s): Philosophy and Political Science

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Welcome to the Black Market

In 2007, the World Health Organization estimated that between 5-10% of all kidney and liver transplants performed around the world annually were conducted with illicitly obtained organs, averaging out to around 5,000-7,000 illegal transplants each year.



“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

Challenges to Organ Procurement in the United States

If I were in need of a kidney transplant today, I would join one of the **91,000** people currently awaiting an organ. In the United States alone, over 3 million people are diagnosed with kidney disease year year.

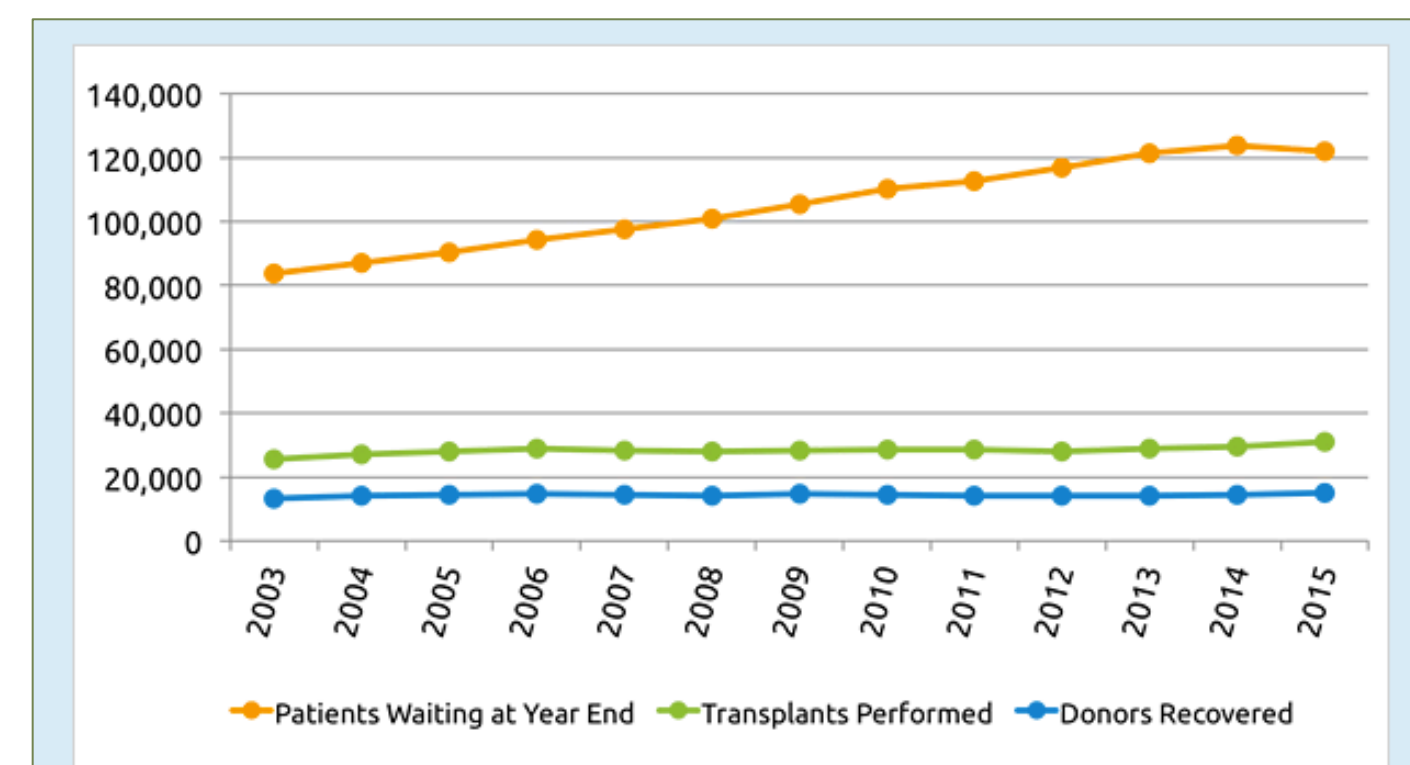


Every ten minutes, someone is added to the national transplant waiting list.



On average, 22 people die each day while waiting for a transplant.

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), only about a **quarter** will receive a transplant within the next year. The average wait time for a kidney is **four to five years long**.



Organ Distribution in the United States

At a Glance

121,249

people need a lifesaving organ transplant (total waiting list candidates). Of those, **77,846** people are **active** waiting list candidates. Totals as of today 10:04am

30,969

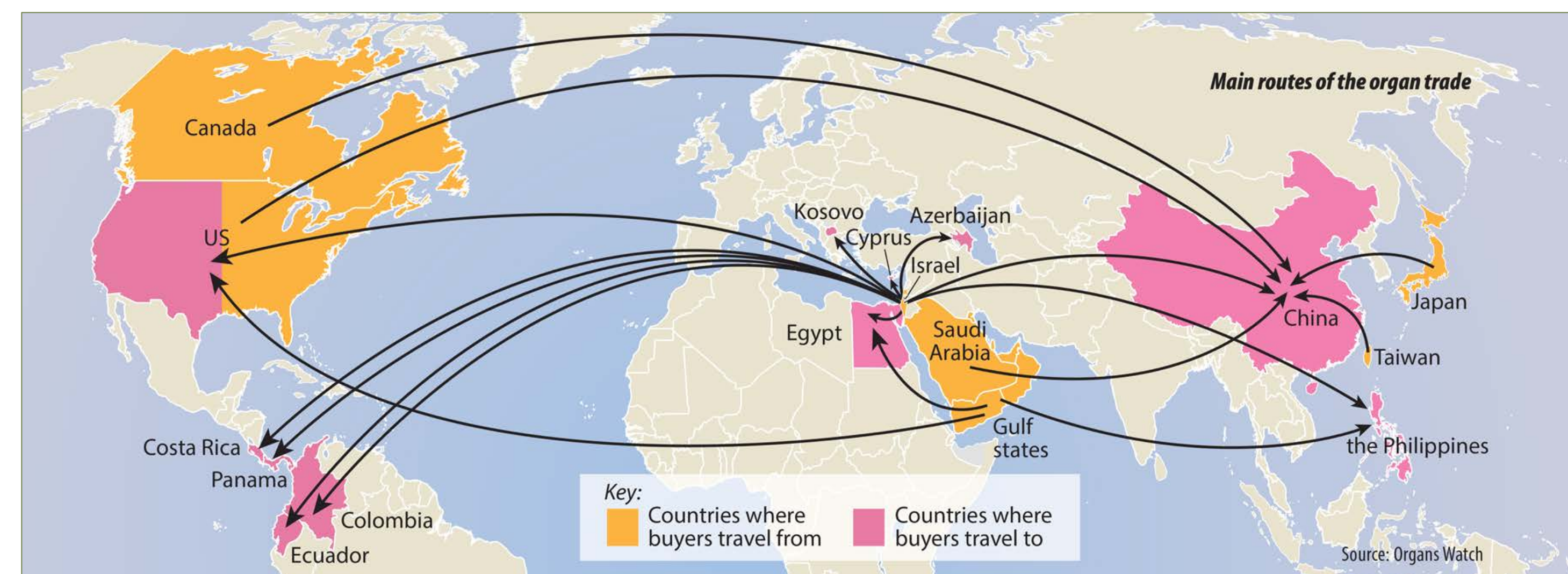
organ transplants performed in 2015
Total Transplants January - December 2015
as of 03/25/2016

15,067

donors
Total Donors January - December 2015
as of 03/25/2016

While transplant medicine has seen tremendous advancements over the previous decades, the number of total transplants performed globally covers only 15% of all patients on the waiting list. Everyday, approximately 22 people on the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) die before ever receiving their anticipated organs. Around 110 people then replace these individuals by the end of the very same day. As the available supply of healthy organs continues to dwindle, international waitlists continue to grow, and more and more people die each day from organ failure, the international black market on organs grows more enticing.

Organ Trafficking Spans International Boundaries



In 2011, the US based Institute for Global Financial Integrity estimated that revenues from illicit organ trafficking ranged from \$600 million to \$1.2 billion per year. While this may seem like a hidden goldmine for readers thinking of a way to make a quick buck, research also revealed that less than 50% of organ transaction funds go to the donors themselves.

Country of origin	Transplanted in	Organ	Amount (mean)	Source
Turkey	Iraq/India	kidney	USD 20,000	Erikoglu
Egypt	China	liver	USD 40,000-USD 75,000	Abdeldayem
Pakistan	Pakistan	kidney	USD 7,300	Rizvi
Foreign	Pakistan	kidney	USD 25,000	Rizvi
Turkey	Egypt	kidney	USD 35,000-USD 40,000	Yakupaglu
Korea	China	kidney	USD 42,000	Kwon
Korea	China	liver	USD 63,000	Kwon
Israel, USA	S.Africa	kidney	USD 100,000-USD 120,000	Netcare case
USA	USA	kidney	USD 120,000 - USD 160,000	Rosenbaum case
Germany/Israel	Kosovo	kidney	USD 108,000	Medicus case

A Regulated Market Approach

In an effort to curb the black market trade on organs, countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have suggested the potential of paying live donors. Studies in the UK suggest that payments of up to £2,000 could help to persuade donors to come forward. Currently, it costs approximately £20,000 to £30,000 a year to keep a kidney patient on dialysis, double the cost of maintaining a transplant patient and for a lower quality of life.

In 2016, the American Journal of Medicine released a survey showing that out of 1011 respondents, 59% indicated that a payment of \$50,000 would make them more likely to donate.

I will be examining the potential for a government regulated market serving in an intermediary capacity to partner donor-patient pairs with others around the globe as a means to maximize the number of transplants that occur per year keeping in mind the health and wellbeing of all parties involved to mitigate the potential for exploitation.

Future Research



With the support of a Fulbright grant, I will be continuing this research in the Philippines, working alongside experts in organ distribution at the Ateneo University School of Medicine and Public Health, the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, and The Medical City. I will be examining the extent to which public health reforms in the Philippines have been effective against the growth and spread of illicit organ trading.

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