
Save Lives, Sell Organs

Segment Length: 5:16 minutes

Lesson Description:

Who could possibly support the selling of human organs? Isn't that wrong? What about all the people waiting for transplants? Who benefits from the sale? Who loses? This video looks at the debate over the sale of human organs.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Black market – a transaction platform, either physical or virtual, where goods or services are exchanged illegally. These come about when people want to exchange goods or services that are prohibited by governments.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- discuss the importance of organ transplants.
- explain the impact of the lack of organs for transplant.
- summarize the ethical questions surrounding the sale of human organs.
- assess the impact of legalizing the sale of human organs for transplant.

Preview Activity and Questions:

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss the preview questions:
Should it be legal for people to be able to sell their organs (body parts)? Why / Why not?

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. kidney
2. irreplaceable part
3. Iran
4. black market
5. buried, burned

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. Legalization would make transplants safer, and bring prices down. People legally sell blood, plasma, sperm, eggs, bone marrow. Why not a _____?
2. Transplant surgeons make money, transplant physicians make money, hospitals make money, drug companies make money. Everybody can get paid except the person who is delivering the _____.
3. Oddly the one country that allows the selling of organs is _____.
4. Now he needs a kidney. He's become one of the growing number of Americans waiting for one. He's unlikely get one, and he won't turn to the _____.
5. Organs that could restore people to health and extend life are instead being _____ and _____.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

Before watching this video, what did you think about people being allowed to sell organs? _____

Has any information in this video led you to rethink your view? _____. If yes, what information? If no, why not? _____

Who should decide if people can sell their own organs? _____

Why? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. Who owns you?
2. What does “my body, my choice” mean?
3. Why do people donate organs? Do enough people donate organs to help everyone in need? Why not?
4. How can we increase the number of people saved by organ donations? Do we need to use force? Should we?
5. How might poor people be hurt from the legal sale of their body parts? How might they be helped?
6. Lloyd Cohen said that with organ transplants, everybody can get paid except the person supplying the organ. Does that seem fair to you? Why / Why not?
7. What about the people who die while waiting for organs?
8. “This is exploiting the weak and the poor,” John Stossel said. But what if the poor person was willing to give up an organ so that he would not be poor?
9. In every state, people can check a box on their driver’s license that allows their organs to be used to help others when they die. Do you think it would make a difference if they knew they would be helping their family financially when they died?
10. What is an “incentive”? Lloyd Cohen said that financial incentives work for everything. They work for food, they work for housing, they work for clothing. Why?
11. Do financial incentives work for you? What examples can you give to demonstrate that financial incentives work? What other types of incentives are there?
12. John Stossel said that whenever demand exceeds supply, black markets appear. Do you have any examples?
13. The National Organ Transplant Act states: “It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly acquire, receive, or otherwise transfer any human organ for valuable consideration for use in human transplantation if the transfer affects interstate commerce.” Why does the act specify “interstate commerce”?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. More than a hundred thousand people wait, hoping to get a kidney. Most wait years.
2. One of three waiting on that [kidney transplant] list will die because there are simply not enough organs available.
3. Whenever demand exceeds supply, black markets appear.
4. Legalization would make transplants safer, and bring prices down. People legally sell blood, plasma, sperm, eggs, bone marrow. Why not a kidney?

5. Body parts to be put into Americans will come from poor countries
6. In the years since Cohen first argued for legal sales, thousands of people on the growing wait lists died. Without a financial incentive not enough people give up an organ.
7. When Iran made it legal, there were more kidneys available and they were cheaper.
8. Organs that could restore people to health and extend life are instead being buried and burned.

Quotes for Discussion:

Potential organ donors are slipping away, and with them, slip away the hopes of countless people and families. – James Redford

Why is it legal to sell body parts for scientific experiments but not to save lives? – Bradford Dorian

The market may work, but some people may feel it's repugnant. – Julio J. Elias

Saving lives is more important than abstract moral concerns: financial incentives should be used to increase organ donations. – Ann Thorac Surg

The possibility of realizing a profit from the organs of the dead could provide an incentive for murder. – C.J. Dougherty

Altruism, while a glorious virtue, is simply not enough. You have succumbed to the straw man argument that giving an organ for free is noble but doing so in exchange for material gain is a sordid affront to human dignity. – Sally Satel

People who need kidneys are dying unnecessarily, and an organ market would save lives. – Benjamin Hippen

When Iran gave generous compensation to live kidney “donors,” it not only met demand but cleared the backlog on its waiting list. – Stephen Wilkinson

Being paid doesn't nullify altruism—doctors aren't less caring because they are paid. With the current system, everyone gets paid except for the donor.” – John Harris

It is not about money. It is about ethics. No price would make me sell any part of this body that has been given to me. It is not mine to sell. It belongs to nature. – John [last name unknown]

Activities:

1. Distribute copies of the PMI chart and have students complete in class or for homework.
2. Show the class the video “Everything” (15:51). An SITC teacher's guide is also available for this video.

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/2017/08/31/everything/>

3. Show the class one or more of the following videos:

Let's Allow a Fair Trade in Kidneys TEDxAmsterdam
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rIPJCsEM60>

Legalization of Organ Sales (against)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF9shmyL6B0>

An Argument for Legalizing Organ Sales
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4rOSFSHeZ4>

How Much Are Your Organs Worth?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6GwyvbG7AM>

4. Have students read and summarize one of the following articles:

“Let People Sell Their Organs” by Abigail Hall
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2015/12/14/sell-organs/#76f8118026e4>

“Ethicists, philosophers discuss selling of human organs” by Corydon Ireland
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/02/ethicists-philosophers-discuss-selling-of-human-organs/>

“What if we paid people to donate their kidneys to strangers?” by Megan McArdle
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/what-if-we-paid-people-to-donate-their-kidneys-to-strangers/2019/01/08/6f397a0c-1391-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html

“The consequences of a donor kidney market” by Jessica Pauline Ogilvie
<https://www.latimes.com/style/la-xpm-2011-mar-28-la-he-pro-con-kidney-donors-20110328-story.html>

5. Conduct a classroom debate on the sale of human organs. The links below can help.
<http://organdonation.com/organ-donation-pros-and-cons/>
<https://transplantliving.org/kidney/pros-and-cons-for-a-living-donor/>
6. Produce a “man-on-the-street” video in which you ask whether or not:
A) people have a right to sell their organs (body parts).
B) people have a right to sell their organs upon their death to benefit their loved one/
Then, explain the lack of enough organs to transplant for those who need them.
7. Research and create a slideshow presentation about organ transplants, the need for more organs to transplant, or the legal and/or moral issues of organ sales.
8. Write a persuasive essay in which you explain the arguments for and against legalizing the sale of human organs and then take and defend a position.
9. Which body parts are in the most need? What are the alternatives if organs are not available for transplant? How many people die waiting for transplants? Research and report on this in a slide show.

10. What parts of your body can you legally sell? Research the laws in your state and report on this in an essay, slide show, or poster board.
11. How do transplant registries work? What are the average wait times for various organs? Who is eligible? What if any are the priorities to move people up on the list?
12. Research and report on the National Foundation for Transplants.
<https://transplants.org/>
13. Write a fictional dialog between you and a friend who needs an organ transplant. In this dialog, explain why you oppose selling human organs and what that belief is likely to mean to your friend. With a fellow student, perform the dialog in front of the class or video record the dialog and show it to the class.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Per _____ Teacher _____

Save Lives, Sell Organs PMI Chart

P = Plus: What might be some positive effects of allowing people to sell their own organs?

M = Minus: What might be some negative effects of allowing people to sell their own organs?

I = Interesting: What are some interesting aspects of allowing people to sell their own organs?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Weighing the plusses and minuses of selling one's own organs, do you favor or oppose such a ban? _____
Explain: _____

If your only means of survival was to purchase an organ from someone willing to sell one, would you answer differently?
Explain: _____

Should people have the right to decide for themselves? _____ Why / Why not? _____

