

# SELLING ORGANS: SOME DEBATES

Ethics: Bioethics (Fall 2014)

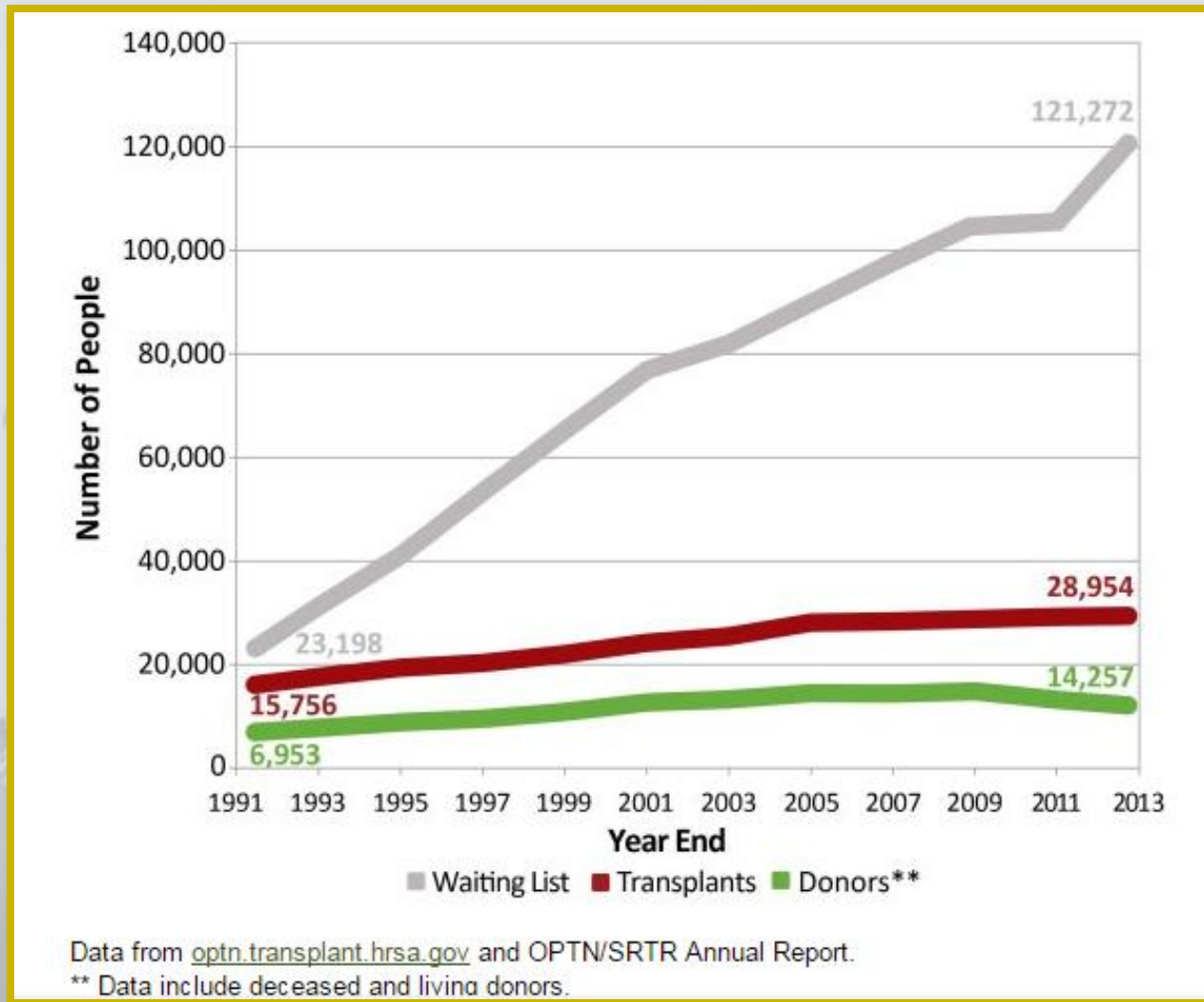
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# DATA ON ORGAN SHORTAGE

- Every 10 minutes, someone is added to the waitlist to receive an organ
- 18 people die each day (on avg.) waiting for an organ
- Organ transplants are not perfect cures, though they can drastically improve and extend life.
- A little more than 1/3 of Americans are signed up to be donors
- Why do you think many potential donors do not offer their organs?

# DATA ON ORGAN SHORTAGE

- The number of people waiting for an organ could fill a large football stadium twice over.



# HOW TO RECEIVE AN ORGAN

- **United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS):**  
private, non-profit organization that manages national organ transplant system
  - Helps to match donors and recipients
  - Maintains database
  - Works to ensure fair allocation, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle or financial/social status
- **Hospitals have some discretion in who is placed on waitlist and who is not**
  - Transplant team decides who good candidates are

**Joralemon & Cox**

# **A CASE AGAINST SELLING**

# BEGINNING CONSIDERATIONS

- **Are you inclined to support pilot studies that are meant to encourage cadaveric donations through moderate incentives?**
- **Conceptions of the self and body at stake**
  - **Body as property, separate from the person**
  - **Self as embodied – continuation of the person (to some degree) following death of the body**
- **Is there an obligation to uphold someone's wishes for his/her body after death?**
  - **What are some moral benefits and moral costs for an opt-out system in place of an opt-in system?**

# SOME CONCERNS

- **“Commerce in organs would encourage people to view individual human beings as saleable commodities” (29)**
- **Should reduce sources of exploitation**
- **Cadavers have moral value and social significance**
- **No relevant “duty to rescue” – altruistic motivation is what gives organ donation its “positive moral weight” (31)**

**Radcliffe-Richards et al. for the International Forum for Transplant Ethics**

# **A CASE FOR SELLING**



# REJOINDERS TO COMMON OBJECTIONS

- **Should not presume poverty precludes informed consent or sufficiently free decisions**
  - **Should expand choice, esp. when otherwise limited**
  - **Exploitation concerns can be handled through proper regulation**
- **Altruism can be present, even if also paid for donation**

# REJOINDERS TO COMMON OBJECTIONS

- **Physicians need not be directly involved in the money-making aspects (preserve role integrity)**
- **Can prevent slippery slope**
  - **E.g., legal prohibitions against vital organ sales**
  - **Could probably control organ market better if legal instead of illegal**
- **Conclusion: “burden of proof remains against the defenders of prohibition” (1952)**

# DISCUSS

- **What are the most compelling moral reasons for incentivizing cadaveric or living organ donations?**
  - **Which incentives are the most concerning?**
- **Do you think that the exploitation potential is high? Do you think selling organs is *necessarily* exploitative?**

# ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- <http://www.organdonor.gov/about/data.html>
- <https://www.kidney.org/news/newsroom/factsheets/Organ-Donation-and-Transplantation-Stats>
- <http://www.unos.org/>
- <http://www.transplantliving.org/before-the-transplant/getting-on-the-list/the-national-waiting-list/>

**QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?**