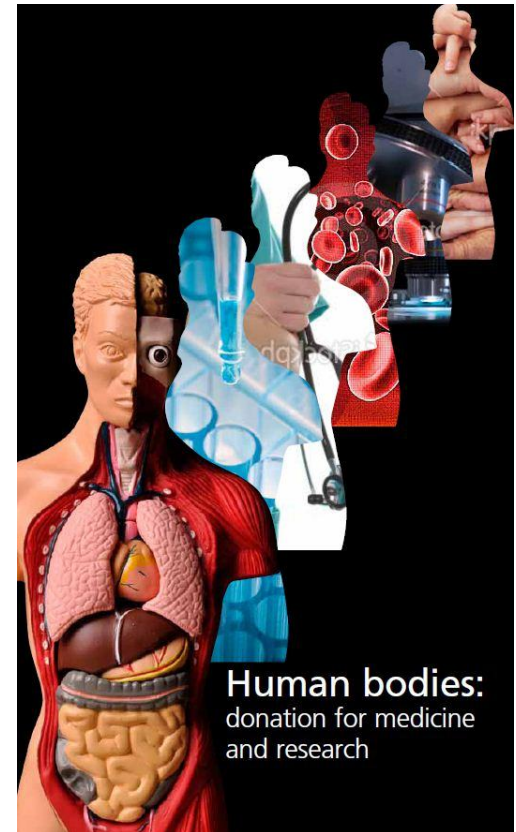


Organ donation: ethical considerations

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What's the (health policy) problem?

Supply and demand

High (and increasing) demand for organs owing to:

- developments in what is medically possible
- life style factors
- public expectations of medical science

Ways of reducing demand:

- public health initiatives
- research into alternatives

What's the (ethical) problem? Whose body?

- Bodily material comes from a person
- Tradition that 'no property in a body'
- But in life we **control** what happens to our body/body parts through requirement for **consent**
- Language of 'donation' strongly implies will and intention – can one 'donate' without active **choice**?

Levers for increasing supply

Focus on the **individual's decision-making:**

- Approach to consent?
- Incentivisation?



Focus on the **system:**

- Organisation & infrastructure

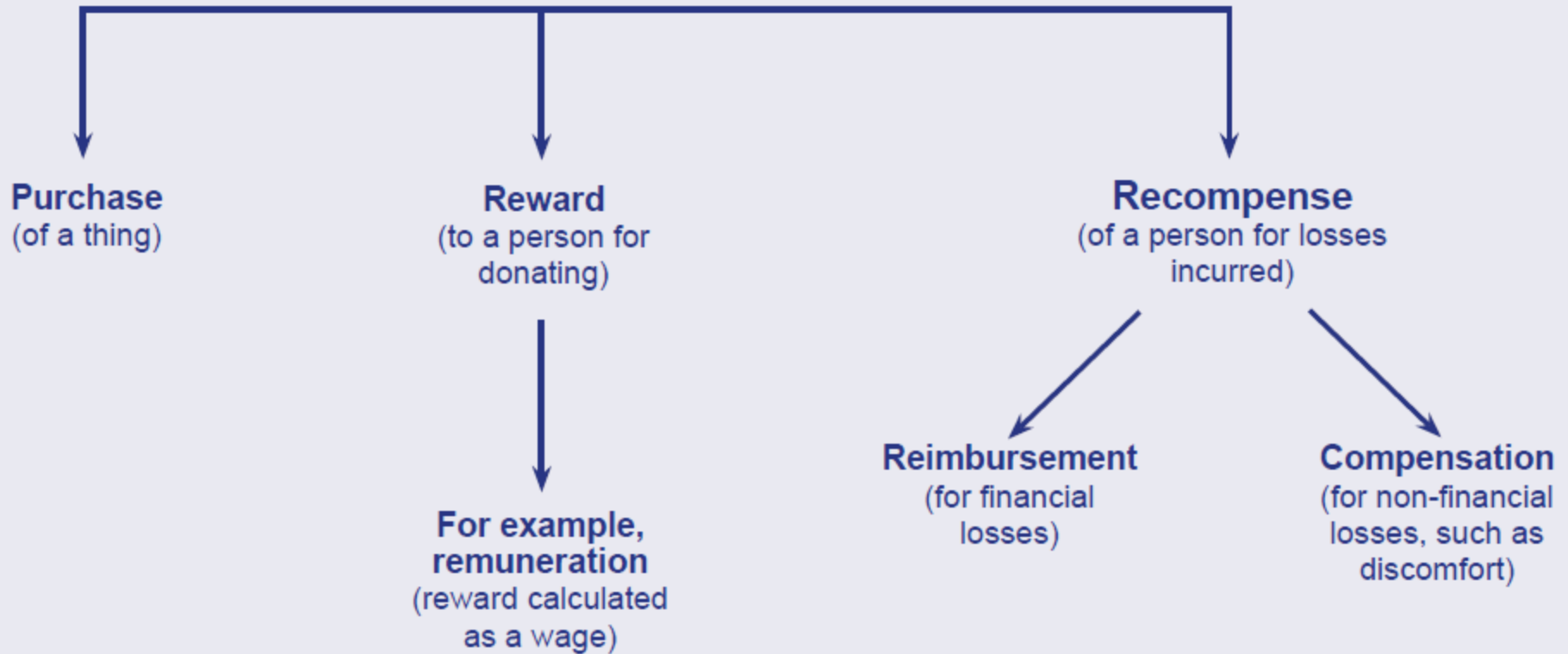
Consent?

- No question consent required for living donation but how about after death?
- Tension between weight placed on active choice of individual, and desire to maximise donation
- Wishes of individual – or of family?
 - ‘mandated’ or ‘prompted’ choice during life?
 - ‘authorisation’ vs ‘consent’?
 - ‘deemed’ consent?
 - no form of consent at all?

Role of money/other reward

- Traditionally strong emphasis on altruism and prohibition on reward – giving for the ‘right reasons’
- Does this rule out incentives to donate?
- If by ‘incentives’ we mean money – is money always bad?
- Are financial rewards and ‘commercialism’ the same thing?

‘What do we mean by ‘payment’?’



Role of money/reward (cont)

- Distinction between ‘purchase of a thing’, and ‘compensation/reward’ for a person
- Can altruism (= a positive desire to help others) ever co-exist with compensation/reward?
- Do ‘incentives’ (= reward for donation beyond recompense for expenses etc) work?

Efficiency of donation system

- Vital role of organisation and infrastructure (both living and deceased donation)
 - are potential donors identified?
 - are people approached in the right way?
 - are the staff/facilities available to make the most of any willingness to donate?
 - do donors (living) and families (deceased) feel respected and appreciated?

Central role of trust

- At the heart – is it a system that people will **trust**?
 - Will they still be treated in their best interests at the end of life?
 - Will the terms of their consent be honoured?
 - Will good use be made of any donated material?
 - Are organs allocated ‘fairly’?



nuffieldbioethics.org/donation

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