

LEGA NAZIONALE CONTRO LA PREDAZIONE DI ORGANI E LA MORTE A CUORE BATTENTE

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THUS SPOKE DAVID W. EVANS, MD, FRCP

Cardiologist who objected to the definition and declaration of 'brain death' and subsequently resigned from his position at Papworth Hospital in Cambridge

LIVING DEATH AND THE ARROGANCE OF DOCTORS WHO WANT TO PLAY GOD

Letter to Daily Mail - In her courageously forthright article under the above title, Melanie Phillips exposes the arrogance of those members of the medical profession who, in the interests of the organ transplantation programme, foisted a redefinition of death upon us - and, in due course, upon lawyers and the laity - in 1979. They did so by means of a fiat from the Medical Royal Colleges, without prior debate - which would have exposed the pseudoscience and sophistry upon which it was based - and without the essential pre-requisite of philosophical consensus about the novel concept of death which they sought to establish.

The mark of the true scientist is that he will say "I do not know" when pressed for an answer to questions about which sound scientific evidence is lacking. That proper humility was sadly absent among those who, charged with redefining death so that hearts and livers could be obtained in transplantable condition, decreed that the bedside tests of brain stem function which had previously been used for prognostic purposes, i.e. to forecast the death of comatose patients within a few days, should henceforth suffice for the diagnosis and certification of death itself - thus avoiding the legal difficulties which would otherwise have attended the removal of vital organs from the legally (and factually) still living. There followed an enormously powerful propaganda campaign, based initially on the absurd notion that such simplistic testing established the death of the brain - though 99% of it was not to be tested - and later on the similarly unsupported claim that it sufficed to ensure that consciousness could not exist or ever return. That campaign has been highly successful as judged by the circa 12 million names currently on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Some of us who have attempted, over the years, to make the relevant facts known to those contemplating registration as prospective donors have been forced to conclude that the Department of Health has a policy of recruitment by deception. Altruistic and trusting people are actively encouraged to signify, by ticking a box, their agreement to the removal of their vital organs "after (my) death" - no explanation being given that those crucial words will be interpreted differently by doctors involved in transplantation from their interpretation by most other doctors in the world and, almost certainly, by their relatives who might, one day, see them being prepared for the surgery to remove their organ donors in that same state. Seeing them still breathing (with the aid of a ventilator) and perfused by their still-beating hearts, and knowing that there may well be parts of their brains still functioning or recoverable, their loved-ones may reasonably question the validity of the "consent" registered on the understanding that they would be dead before they were operated upon for the sake of others.

David W Evans, MD, FRCP

On 29/10/1992 David Evans took part to the Hearing in the Social Affairs Commission (Health) of Italian Parliament about the redefinition of death on behalf of Lega Antipredazione to stop the "brain death".



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