Evening Ethics

“Are U.S. physicians complicit in unethical organ harvesting when they provide surgical education to international transplant physicians?”

Wednesday
May 31, 2017
5:30-7:00PM

Research

Administration Building
#117

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Light Refreshments served

CME Offered

Although organ trafficking and transplant tourism have raised ethical questions for many years, recent events have heightened concerns. In February 2017, the British Medical Journal retracted an article about a Chinese liver transplantation study after the authors "failed to persuade editors that 564 livers grafted in the course of the research were not taken from executed prisoners." An Australian researcher had alerted BMJ editors of the "statistical improbability" that so many livers could have been freely donated. The Vatican also held a Pontifical Academy of Science Summit on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism in February. The international group Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting (DAFOH) reported that in China "anywhere between 100,000 and 1 million prisoners of conscience have been killed for their organs in the past 17 years." A majority of the prisoners are practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual practice that the Communist Party illegally banned in 1999 and continues to persecute heavily. However, other minority populations are also targets of alleged organ trafficking, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, and House Christians. Despite the Chinese Communist Party attempting to say the practice has stopped, there is no evidence to support this claim.

Leading our Evening Ethics Discussion will be Glynn Weldon Gilcrease, M.D., U of U assistant professor of oncology, who serves as deputy director of DAFOH. He has worked closely with David Matas, a Canadian lawyer specializing in refugee law and co-author with David Kilgour of Bloody Harvest: The Killing of Falun Gong for Their Organs (2009), which has been made into a documentary. Questions we'll discuss include:

- What are the ethical ramifications of organ trafficking and transplant tourism for U.S. physicians?
- Are health-care professionals obligated to care for patients who receive an organ transplant in a country that is suspected of illicit organ trafficking?
- Should U.S. surgeons adopt prohibitions similar to Australia and Taiwan, which do not provide surgical education to Chinese physicians?

Background readings**:

Matas, David. “Ethical standards and Chinese organ transplant abuse,” (Revised remarks for a presentation to the Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanism, College of Medicine, University of Arizona, 15 April, 2016)

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