

## Legalise sale of kidneys, urges expert

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dying from renal failure. Everything I'm saying is just an extension of what exists. We've already got systems in place for men to donate sperm and women to donate eggs – that's paid-for donation.

“The special thing about kidneys is that we have two of them. Most of us can get by on one. The other thing is that live kidney donation is better than any deceased kidney donation. It's medically stronger and it's going to do more for the recipient than anything that comes from a dead person.

She said donors could be paid from a pool of money set aside by the NHS, preventing a black market trade in organs. A similar system could be applied to liver and blood donation, she added.

## Market in body parts is unethical

THE proposal that individuals should be paid £28,000 for one of their kidneys raises a number of very serious ethical concerns.

The living human body is, indeed, an integral and constitutive part of the human person and cannot be treated as an object that has a price. This is the reason, for example, why it is impossible to sell oneself or even one's children into slavery. To place a financial value on human beings or parts of human beings undermines the inherent dignity of the human person as well as the innate and immeasurable worth of all individuals.

A market in human body parts would also result in the exploitation of the most vulnerable people in society such as those who have very restrictive financial means. It is unlikely that the rich would consider such an option. And the fact that poor persons already accept risks that others may refuse (such as working in



**COMMENT**  
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dangerous occupations), does not justify adding yet another danger to their burden.

There is no reason to believe, moreover, that receiving a lump sum of money would be a solution to an individual's underlying problems. Evidence from Iran, which has the only legal organ market in the world, shows that over the long term, many who sell kidneys do not resolve their financial difficulties.

But one of the most important ethical arguments against organ sales is that the free and unconstrained consent of the persons involved does not exist when money changes hands. Instead, many may feel that they have no alternative and that selling their body part is their only solution.

The sale of organs is, therefore, rightly prohibited by Scottish legislation in the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 and in international law by the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, which states in Article 21 that: “The human body and its parts shall not, as such, give rise to financial gain.”

The sale of organs would promote the principle that anything can be consented to so long as the price is right including the most unethical practices that go against the very basis of international human rights.

The shortage of organs for transplantation should, therefore, be addressed by working to increase the rate of voluntary donations where there is still a lot of room for improvements.

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