

In 2009, I donated my husband's organs. It is unquestionably one of the best things I have ever done, it gave him a dignity and purpose in death and was, and remains, a source of great comfort to me. Paradoxically, it was through this experience that I developed a profound unease with regard to the whole notion of presumed consent, which I had previously considered a 'no brainer.' This is partly because of what is necessarily a part of the process; that of being taken to one side to answer questions which are of a deeply personal nature. Unless you are completely committed to the principle and are able to in some way come to terms with the imminent demise of your loved one, this could be deemed to be intrusive and in some cases could adversely affect the grieving process. One only has to look at the furore surrounding the tissue collection at Alder Hey to appreciate some of the deeply held sensitivities about organs.

Of greater significance to me was the realisation that it really did matter to me that my husband's organs were a gift, freely given to others in need. This is what I have tried (and failed) to communicate at the two meetings I have attended about this bill. I have also been increasingly concerned about the vocabulary that is used in support of proponents of the bill. My husband was turned down for a lung transplant shortly before his death, so we had been aware that, had he been accepted we would have had to come to terms with the fact that someone would have had to die to facilitate that. Whilst I appreciate that most people would move Heaven and Earth to secure an organ for a loved one, the argument that '*They*' have '*got*' to give him an organ is missing the point - it would be fantastic if someone did, but there is no obligation to do so. My husband's liver went to King's during the time that the hospital was later shown to have been selling theatre space to overseas recipients. I have no idea whether his liver was one of those involved, but I have never received any thanks from any of the seven recipients of his organs and tissue - which I don't actually mind,- but it did occur to me that had I paid several thousand pounds towards the cost of an operation, I would be less appreciative of the human costs of any organ I received. Similarly, once it becomes a matter of state policy, the significance of the donor is somehow devalued. Additionally, although I cannot imagine any of the wonderful team who dealt with us being guilty of any coercion, I can envisage situations in which that may be perceived to be the case, which would be a shame.

The bill was launched with the expressed intention to 'make' Wales altruistic. Unfortunately, this is inherently flawed; by definition 'altruism ceases to be altruistic once it is enshrined in legislation. I am passionately committed to increasing the number of donors, but do not believe that this bill is an appropriate vehicle to facilitate this. I do not think there has been anything like enough attention given to the needs of donor families and feel that the current shortage of organs has more to do with modern society's attitude towards death - well beyond the scope of this bill!

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