

DONATE SKIN, SAVE LIVES

For any patient with over 30 per cent burn injuries, a skin transplant from a donor is crucial to save his/her life. However, despite the high instance of deaths recorded due to infections among burn patients, the concept of skin donation remains unheard of.

As part of an awareness programme on skin donations the National Burn Centre (NBC) — which is promoted by the Indian Burns Research Society, a registered charitable institute, Mumbai — will hold its first meeting with Pune-based plastic surgeons and other NGOs in the city on October 5, Sunday.

“We plan to set up a skin retrieval team here and subsequently, a skin bank in Pune,” acting medical director, NBC Sunil Keswani told TOI.

“Over the years, through rigorous awareness campaigns, medical practitioners have been able to sensitise people towards donating eyes, blood and kidneys etc. and these efforts have borne good results. However, much needs to be done for skin donation,” he said. The NBC has already set up a stall at the Ishanya mall in Yerawada, as part of the ongoing Yellow Ribbon pre-Diwali NGO fair, to make people aware about the concept of skin donation.

This awareness campaign on skin donation is significant considering the fact that the burn hospitals in the city report a very high mortality rate. In Pune, besides a burns ward at the Sassoon general hospital, Surya hospital near Shanirwarwada is the only specialised hospital dedicated to treating patients suffering from burn injuries.

“Skin taken from deceased donors helps save

24x7 Helpline

Call 27643333, a 24-hour helpline or 09820031881/09833079765 if you need any information on burns or treatment methods or for expert opinion. You can call if you wish to donate the skin of a relative who has passed away, but was not a registered donor. An ambulance will arrive and do the skin removal procedure within 45 minutes. The helpline will be available to patients who need skin as soon as the skin bank receives any donation.

the lives of burns victims, but general awareness about it is so low that doctors are forced to resort to costlier and tedious procedures and even then the mortality rate is too high,” said plastic surgeon Shrirang Pandit of Surya Hospital. This 70-bed hospital has attended to around 5,000 major burn cases in the last 10 years.

Graphic: Aamir Shaikh



Is the body disfigured when skin is removed?

No. The removal of skin is a surgical procedure and only a wafer-thin transparent layer is removed. The body is treated with the same dignity and respect as during any other operation.

What happens to your donated skin?

A system is in place to use skin donation fairly. Factors such as race, gender, age, income and celebrity status are not considered when determining who receives the donated skin.

Will your decision to become a skin donor affect the quality of your medical care before death?

No. Organ and tissue recovery happens only after every effort has been made to save your life, and death has been legally declared.

Are skin transplants successful?

Yes. Transplantation has become a very successful and accepted treatment. Skin grafting does not need to match tissue types between donor and recipient.

Does skin donation become a hindrance in performing the deceased's last rites?

No. Sadhus confirm that as long as the feet and face are untouched final rites can be conducted. Skin grafts are taken only from the thighs and back of a deceased donor.