

Transplant Medicine at a Crossroads

Harvesting Organs from Prisoners Leads Transplant Medicine *ad absurdum*

Good evening, Buenas tardes a todos! My name is Alejandro Centurion, I am a medical neurologist practicing in Monterey, California and a member of DAFOH.

DAFOH is an NGO, based in Washington DC, whose goal is to inform the medical community as well as patients about forced organ harvesting practices and to promote ethics in transplant medicine and to stop unethical forms of organ harvesting worldwide, with a current focus on China, the only country in the world that officially allows the practice of Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners.

Transplant medicine has given a new life to countless people around the world. I am personally grateful to the transplant community and the organ donation systems that have given my mother and younger brother a new life. My mother received a kidney transplant in the United States a few years ago and a younger brother is alive because of a liver transplant in Spain. When carried out with ethical standards, what has been accomplished in transplant medicine is something the medical community can be proud about. But faced with the violation of medical ethics in China, where medical doctors are violating the most basic ethical standards and are complicit in serious crimes, transplant medicine today is at a crossroads.

Slide #2

Let me start with a historical anecdote that is relevant to the practice of Forced Organ Harvesting.

Jan Karski was a Polish diplomat witnessed the Holocaust and came to the United States to ask for help.

He reported to the Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and spent half an hour explaining what he had witnessed.

Justice Frankfurter responded: "I am unable to believe you."

The Polish Ambassador Ciechanowski objected: "Felix, How can you call him a liar to his face!"

Frankfurter replied: "Mr. Ambassador, I did not say this young man is lying. I said I am unable to believe him. There is a difference."

This just illustrates that at times some things are hard to believe but it does not mean they are not true.

Slide #3

Since the year 2000 the number of transplant in China has increased dramatically, an increase that could be best described as exponential. China now performs the second most transplants per year, around 10,000, second only to the United States. This is despite not having an effective public organ donation program and a society which, for cultural reasons, is averse to organ donation.

Slide #4

So, where are all the organs coming from?

Slide ,#5

In June 2001 Dr. Wang Guoqi, a former Chinese military doctor testified before the US Congress that he had witnessed and participated in organ harvesting from executed prisoners. China executes more prisoners than all other countries around the world combined. China not only executes prisoners for crimes such as murder and rape but other minor offenses, such as tax evasion and others. The Chinese government flatly denied Dr. Guoqi's allegations. The practice of obtaining organs for executed prisoners is a violation of human rights as established by multiple international treaties, Nuremberg and Helsinki, and international medical associations.

Slide #6 The long-term suspicion was eventually confirmed in November 2005, when a Chinese newspaper the *Tsing Dao Daily* reported that Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Huang Jiefu, acknowledged that the majority of organs for transplant came from executed prisoners. It reported that less than five percent of organs for transplants came from voluntary donors while over 90 percent of the organs stemmed from executed prisoners.

Slide #7 Just 4 months later, in March 2006 allegation of another source of organs came from three witnesses who stated, independently from each other, that there existed a secret source of organs in China. These witness reports led to further investigations into the allegations that Falun Gong practitioners in China were being killed for their organs, harvested for transplantation while still alive.

Slide #8 The first hint about forced organ harvesting from living people was published by "PETER" (aka, "Jin Zhong"), a Chinese national who worked at a Japanese news agency in China. While in 2003 investigating the SARS outbreak, Peter reportedly traveled to Sujiatun, China, and discovered the secret organ harvesting operation there. Peter's sources are said to include high-ranking regime officials who first alerted him to the matter, as well as sources in the public health system and hospital employees. He personally interviewed several surgeons directly involved in the affair. Peter also obtained an audio recording of farmers, who operated the hospital's crematorium, in which they admit to destruction of victims' bodies and the looting of personal items such as watches and rings.

Slide #9 A week later, ANNIE“, a Chinese national who worked at a medical facility next to Sujiatun, the place investigated by “Peter”, told the world media that her then-husband was a

surgeon at the hospital. In 2003 he revealed to Annie that he had been involved, since 2001, in forcibly removing organs from living Falun Gong prisoners of conscience. She also found diary entries detailing his activities. She left her husband after the revelations, and came to the United States.

Slide #10 On March 30, 2006, an anonymous veteran military doctor in the Shenyang Military Region, disclosed that the Shenyang camp is but one of 36 concentration-type camps throughout China, with the largest holding upwards of 120,000 people. He claimed that the organ harvesting scheme is orchestrated and run by China's military apparatus, with much of what happens being tightly-sealed, classified information. Those performing the organ excisions are said to have clearance from none other than the Central Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party.

Slide #11 In July 2006 two independent Canadian investigators, David Kilgour and David Matas, published their first report about the alleged organ harvesting in China. The initial conclusion of their findings was that in six-year period 2000 to 2005 since the persecution of Falun Gong began, there were 41,000+ cases of transplants, the source of which organs remain unexplained based on official Chinese figures. These numbers were deduced from numbers provided by Shi Bingyi, vice-chair of the China Medical Organ Transplant Association and public records. These figures show that 60,000 organs were transplanted for the six-year period 2000 to 2005 and there were 18,500 in the six-year period between 1994 and 1999. There are 41,500 more transplants in the six-year period after the persecution of Falun Gong began than the five years before. If executed prisoners are assumed to be the main source of transplants, 95% according to Chinese sources, and other sources of organ transplants are negligible (willing family donors and the brain dead), and the numbers of executed prisoners remained unchanged, according to Amnesty International, about 1,600 executions per year), this leaves 41,000+ organs transplants that are not accounted for.

Slide #12 Starting in 2001 there was an exponential increase in transplantations performed. Various hospitals posted Websites offering transplants of various organs within 1-4 weeks. This is compared to 2-5 years in most western countries. There was a rapid increase in transplantation centers. For example there were 106 centers performing kidney transplantations before 1999 and more than tripled to 368 by 2006. The expanding infrastructure would suggest there is confidence in future donor organs, despite having no public organ donation system.

Slide #13 This is an example of Tianjing Oriental Organ Transplant Center: You can see here the exponential increase in Kidney (77 to 436) and Liver transplants (67 to 647) from 2000 to 2005.

Slide #14 Just to list a few examples of astonishing cases that illustrate an abundance of organs during this time, what has been referred to as "Organs on demand":

-In March 2006 a Chinese newspaper reports about a case in which a medical doctor transplanted a matching heart within 24 hours after it was established that the patient needed a heart transplantation.

When the UN Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak visited China in 2005, he found in prisons persons sentenced to death at first instance awaiting appeal, but none sentenced to death awaiting execution. When he asked to see such prisoners, he was told that there were none, because all prisoners sentenced to death whose appeals had been exhausted were executed immediately. So, if the number of actual death row prisoners is low at any given time, what is the chance there was a prisoner was on death row at that time with a matching blood and tissue type to provide the heart to this patient in 24 hours?

Slide #15 In April 2006 a hospital in Hunan advertised that they had 20 kidneys and livers for free transplantation and that people in need can just come to the hospital.

In 2005 the newspaper China Daily reported that 20,000 transplantations were performed in 2005; using the number of estimated executions, that would be a ratio of 10 transplantations from each execution using Amnesty International's estimate of around 2000 a year. The number of executions however is likely to be higher, the highest estimate from sources within China is 10,000 a year.

Slide #16 David Matas in a Speech in Glasgow this year did a statistical analysis of the number of executed prisoners you would need to be able to provide transplants for 10,000 recipients. Taking into account multiple variables, including the blood type/HLA matching, the lack of an adequate organ distribution system and other factors that make it unlikely an executed prisoner will be able to provide organs to more than one patient, the fact that about 50-60 % of Chinese population has hepatitis B, as well as other variables, he estimated that you would need a factor of 10 to 1, meaning ten executed prisoners for every organ transplant. With 20,000 transplants, that would mean 200,000 executions would be needed. Even if you question the statistical analysis and say the ratio is lower, say 5:1 or 3:1, that would still be 100,000 or 60,000 executions, which we know is not the case. There has to be some other source or organs.

Slide #17 –So where do all the organs come from? To be able to provide the large quantity of organs on demand requires a large pool of donor organs.

Slide #18 According to various witnesses, only Falun Gong practitioners are systematically blood tested and undergo extensive physically exams in detention centers. Given that this group is persecuted and subject to extensive forms of torture, the additional expenses for blood test and examination are less likely to be out of a genuine concern for their health. According to multiple phone interviews reviewed by Kilgour and Matas, with medical doctors in various hospitals, Falun Gong practitioners are admittedly used nationwide as living donor for organs in China. This is strong evidence in support that Falun Gong practitioners are used as a living organ donor pool.

Slide #19 This slide is of Falun Gong practitioner Ms. Wang Yuzhi, who was detained by authorities in China for practicing Falun Gong. She was severely tortured for 10 months and Chinese

authorities took Wang to hospitals in Harbing for special examination of her internal organs. Mrs. Wang was fortunate the authorities found her organs “unsuitable” because repeated hunger strikes and torture left her in poor health.

Slide #20 This slide shows a map of cities where Chinese physicians confirmed by telephone calls they have organs from captive Falun Gong practioners. There are transcripts and actual recordings available on line.

Slide #21 In April 2006 a journalist from Sound of Hope radio station contacted a transplant surgeon in Beijing. The doctor in the Air Force Hospital admitted they had young and healthy Falun Gong practitioner donors. The audio file is available.

Slide #22 I want to mention the case of Dr. Lu Guoping, one of the most compelling admissions from a doctor in China. David Kilgour and Matas had investigators who called hospitals throughout China, pretending to be relatives of patients who needed transplants, asking the hospitals if they had organs from Falun Gong practitioners for transplant. The justification for the questions was that, since Falun Gong is an exercise regime, the Falun Gong practitioners would be healthy and their organs would be healthy.

One of these recordings was from Lu Guoping, at Minzu Hospital. He said, on a recording, that his hospital used to have organs from Falun Gong practitioners, but no longer had them. Here are some of the exchanges:

"Caller: ...what you used before, were they from detention centers or prisons?

"Lu Guoping: From prisons.

"C: Oh, prisons. And it was from healthy Falun Gong practitioners, the healthy Falun Gong right?

"LG: Right, right, right. We would choose the good ones, because we will assure the quality of our operations.

"C: That means you choose the organs yourselves?

"LG: Right, right, right."

He later referred the caller to a hospital in Guangzhou, saying that this hospital would have Falun Gong organs.

This doctor was later featured in a documentary released by Phoenix TV, a Hong Kong based TV, where Lu Guoping admits having received the call, and also to referring the caller to a Guangzhou hospital.

However, he denies that the transcript is accurate.

When shown a transcript of the interview on the program, Dr. Lu claims that it is a distorted version of the conversation. However, the existence of the audio recording that forms the basis of the transcript is not discussed. The official audio recording is available on line.
<http://organharvestinvestigation.net/Dr.Lu-Voice-Recording/>

Matas and Kilgour sum up the evidence: “So here we have on our recording an admission from a doctor that he and his colleagues used to go to a prison to select Falun Gong practitioners for their organs. He does not just say that someone else did this. He says that he and his colleagues used to do this themselves. Moreover, we have a further admission that the voice we have on our recording is the voice of the very person our recording says he is.”

Slide # 23 What is Falun Gong, why is it persecuted? Falun Gong is a self-cultivation method with elements of Daoism and Buddhism. It is a practice of five qigong physical exercises combined with teachings that are based on, Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance. It was publicly spread in China from 1992 to 1999. At that time a government survey showed there were up to 70-100 million Chinese practicing this form of qigong, including many members of the government. The Chinese government was very supportive of Falun Gong, giving it awards for its health benefits.

In July 1999 the former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, because of the large number practicing it without state control, decided to outlaw the Falun Gong movement without legal authorization and initiated the persecution of its adherents. During the more than ten years of persecution, Falun Gong has been practiced and well received in more than 70 countries. In no other country Falun Gong is marginalized, outlawed and persecuted, except in China.

Slide #24 The persecution of Falun Gong has been well documented by the United Nation and human rights organizations. Falun Gong is the largest persecuted group in China. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak estimates that 66% of cases of torture in Chinese are of Falun Gong. The exact number practitioners detained in labor camps is not know for sure, but the number is large. The Laogai foundation in the United States estimates there are between 500,000 and 2 million prisoners. Based on different estimates, 25% to 50% percent of prisoners in these camps are Falun Gong adherents. This would mean somewhere between 100,000 and 1million Falun Gong prisoners in these camps. Although the exact number can't be know, it is clearly a very large number, enough to serve as a “live organ bank”.

Slide # 25 How is it possible that forced organ harvesting of Falun Gong could occur? After the persecution of Falun Gong began, the Chinese government waged an intense campaign of propaganda inside and outside of China, employing the state controlled media to defame and spread false, misleading information about Falun Gong throughout Chinese society and the world. This group of people was outlawed and “excluded” from the Chinese society, becoming subject to marginalization and discrimination. Like academics and landowners during the Cultural Revolution and students in 1989, once a certain group of people is arbitrarily outlawed by the CCP in China, those individuals lose all basic rights of a human being. They lose their right of living. They are

demoted and become a life of such an individual can be killed within minutes. A military doctor, like any other military personnel in China who is trained in executing the order given by his superior, won't hesitate to extract the organs from such a "class enemy" if he is asked to do so, as he also would not hesitate to shoot an intruding soldier from a hostile army.

Slide #26 I just want to show a couple of slides showing evidence of torture and dehumanization in the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

- A few slides taken from the UN files on Falun Gong persecution – In this the guards at Masaniia prison in Liaoning province stripped 18 female FG practitioners and put them in male convict cells where they were gang raped.

Slide #27 This slide Illustrates the torture inflicted with electric batons on two female FG practitioners.

Slide # 28 Besides the Falun Gong prisoners of conscience who have been targets of forced organ harvesting, there is evidence that the Chinese government has also killed other prisoners for organs who have committed no crime. Ethan Guttmann, a British investigative journalist and author has written on the subject and interviewed a Uyghur doctor, Dr Tohti, exiled in the UK, who witnessed and participated in organ harvesting of Uygurs during the repression of this ethnic group in the 1990's. Mr. Guttmann has also interviewed ex Chinese prisoners, and reports evidence to suggest some Christian groups as well as Tibetans may have been subject to forced organ harvesting. These groups have not been systematically targeted en masse as the Falun Gong.

Slide # 29 I would like to end with a few notable changes that have taken place out side of China from the medical community:

1. Israel passed a law banning the sale and brokerage of organs. It also ended its funding the health insurance system for transplants for Israelis going to China.
2. Taiwan banned the visit of Chinese doctors brokering organ transplants
3. The major transplant hospitals in Queensland, Australia, has banned training Chinese surgeons.

Slide # 30 The American Journal of Transplantation, one of the most prestigious transplant journals, just recently published an opinion article by Dr. Danovitch, Dr. Shapiro and Dr. Lavee, "The use of executed prisoners as a source of Organ Transplants must Stop" and following this the Journal has officially stated it will not accept any submitted medical articles from China with data obtained from executed prisoners. There are more Journals beginning to follow this policy.

Slide #31 All of these actions are important steps to stop the ethical abuses taking place in China today.

Slide #32

At this WMA meeting, a new resolution is being proposed through the Associates group, submitted by DAFOH. The new resolution builds on the excellent work the WMA has done in previous years to try to end the gross violation of medical ethics taking place in transplant medicine in China. The WMA adopted a Resolution in 2005 demanding that the Chinese Medical Association condemn the practice of harvesting of organs from prisoners since prisoners are not in a position to give consent freely, and in 2007 the Chinese Medical Association agreed to follow the WMA Statement on Human Organ Donation and Transplantation and further promote ethical transplantation in China. Since despite this, now over four years later Chinese transplants continue to rely almost exclusively on organ from executed prisoners and because of the evidence that Chinese authorities are killing prisoners of conscience, mostly practitioners of Falun Dafa, but also occasionally Uighurs, Christians and others. The resolution reiterates the World Medical Association's prohibition of any involuntary organ removal not only from executed prisoners, but also from all individuals in detention centers, work camps, hospitals and other places of confinement; and calls upon the Chinese Medical Association, as member of WMA, to demand four issues of the Chinese government.

1. To implement an amendment to the Chinese transplantation law which would prohibit the use of organs from executed prisoners for transplants according to the international code of ethics; and
2. To abide by the international code of ethics that regulates the 'free and informed consent' of organ donors and to refrain from classifying any written statement of prisoners and detainees as 'free and informed consent';
3. To take appropriate legal action against persons who violate the organ transplantation law and ensure that Chinese doctors are not involved in the removal or transplantation of organs from executed Chinese prisoners or other detainees;
4. To abide by the World Health Organization's guiding principles on organ donation and transplantation which urges member states to provide transparent and traceable access to organ donation and transplantation data.

We hope that this resolution along with the continued efforts of concerned other organizations, medical doctors and other individuals around the world, we can support those medical doctors in China who wants to abide by international ethical standards and bring these gross violation of medical ethics to an end once and for all.

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Call for Action **- What can we do? -**

1. Inform medical journals: Papers from Chinese medical institutions related to transplant medicine should not become part of medical knowledge and must not be published.
2. Inform your medical colleagues and medical doctors.
3. Alert your patients in time - only transparency will prevent our patients from losing trust in the medical profession.
4. Medical doctors and scholars from China should not be accepted for training or research in transplant related programs!

5. Write to transplantation societies!

6. Ask your representatives in the government to take action, e.g. by adding the information to the travel advisory for China.

7. Sign our petition on our website!