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Who deserves a transplant?

Heidi Schlumpf | Jan. 17, 2012 NCR Today

The whole system that decides which patients get organ transplants is fraught with moral quandaries. Sadly, there are more folks who need hearts, kidneys, lungs and other organs than there are donated organs, so a number of factors need to be considered, including how critical the transplant is and the likelihood of survival and satisfactory quality of life after transplant.

But should a child with intellectual disabilities be denied a transplant based solely on those disabilities?

Thousands are saying "no" after reading about a 3-year-old girl who allegedly was was denied the possibility of a transplant [1]--even with an kidney donated by a family member--at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

In a blog post [2] that went viral over the weekend, the parents of Amelia Rivera, who was born with Wolf?Hirschhorn syndrome [3], described a meeting in which they were told their daughter would be left to die within six months to a year because she would not qualify for the transplant surgery because of her "brain damage" and "mental retardation."

The hospital, responding to an online petition [4] with more than 20,000 signatures and hundreds of negative comments on its Facebook page, released a statement on Facebook saying it cannot comment on individual cases but that it does not discriminate. A conference call is scheduled for today to set up a second meeting between the family and the transplant team, CBS News reports.
[5]

When Target quietly included a model with Down Syndrome [6] in one of their ads last month, parents of kids with special needs made sure everyone knew about it. They're using the Internet to spread this not-so-good news, too.

According to a "USA Today" story [1] about the Rivera case, "43% of child transplant programs surveyed for a study published in 2008 'always' or 'usually' considered developmental delay in transplant decisions."

Health care rationing already happens, and it's often the most vulnerable who are denied care. This is a moral issue and, I would argue, a prolife one, too.

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Links:
[1] http://yourlife.usatoday.com/parenting-family/special-needs/story/2012-01-16/Team-Amelia-backs-transplant-for-special-needs-child/52603482/1
[2] http://www.wolfhirschhorn.org/2012/01/amelia/brick-walls/
[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf%E2%80%93Hirschhorn_syndrome
[4] http://www.change.org/petitions/executive-vice-president-and-chief-development-officer-allow-the-kidney-

transplant-amelia-rivera-needs-to-survive
[5] http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2012/01/16/childrens-hospital-denies-withholding-kidney-transplant-for-disabled-girl/#at_pco=cfs-1.0
[6] http://dailynightly.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/01/16/10168449-child-model-with-down-syndrome-inspires-thousands