



# The Forgotten Organ Donor: A Call for Greater Palliative Care Involvement



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## Background

- Organ donation has evolved over the past 40 years as optimal therapy for end organ disease
- The number of available organs have increased, particularly through the expansion of donation after circulatory death

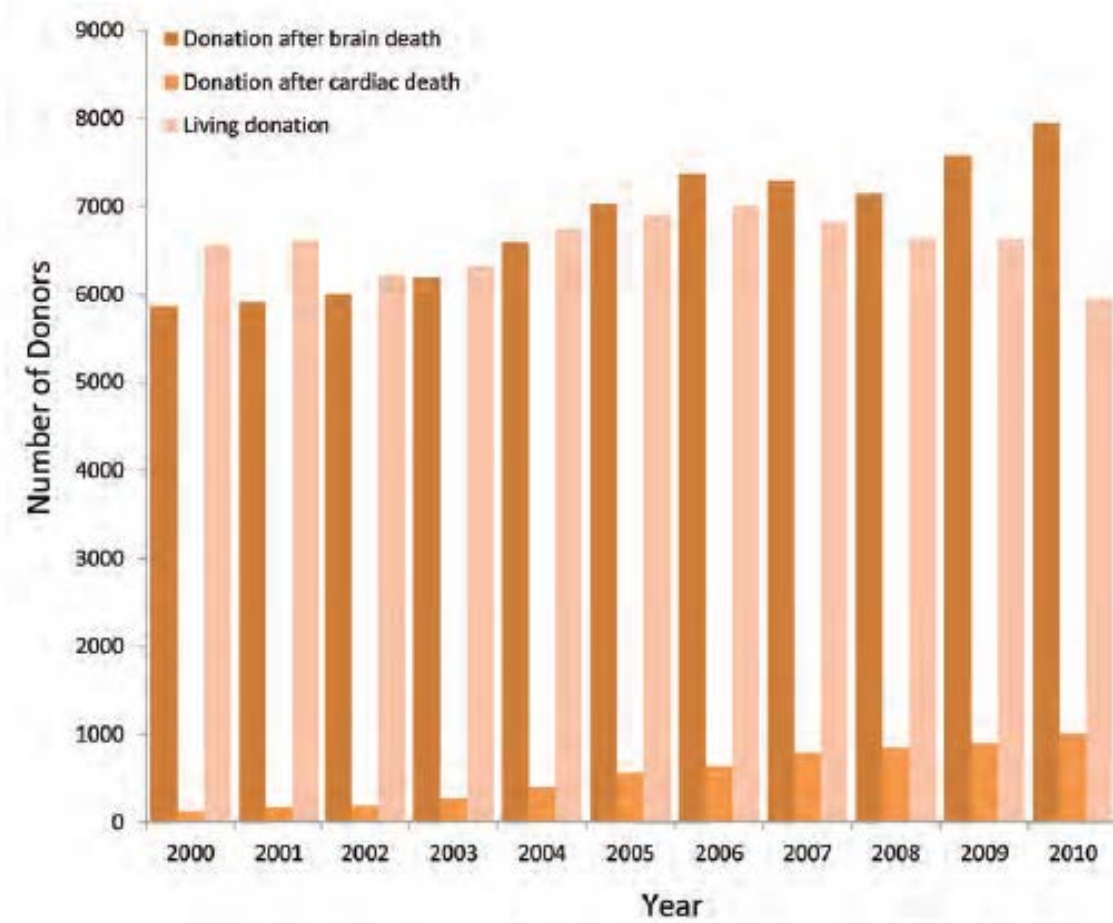
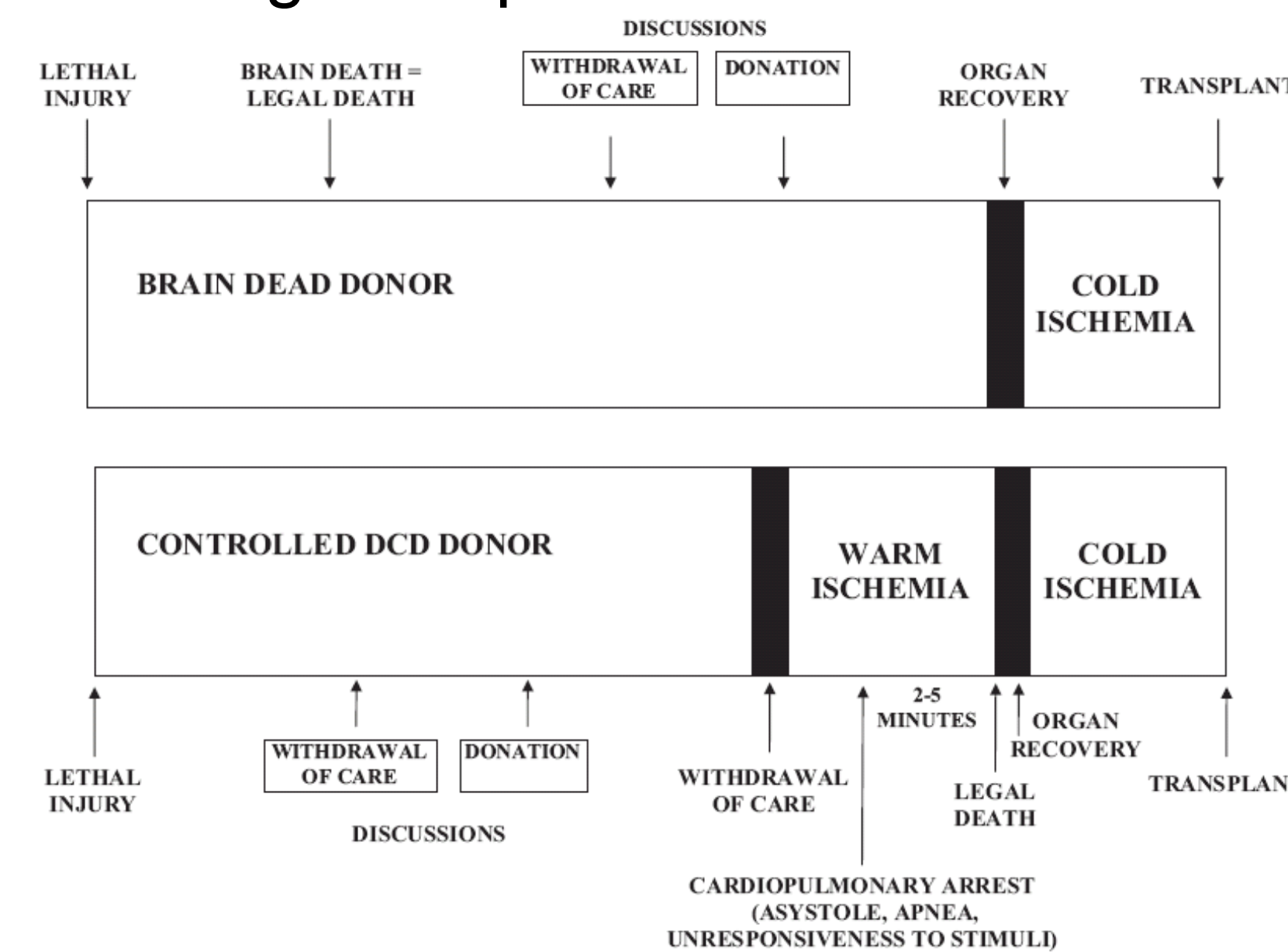


Figure 1: The number of organ donors in the USA (2001-2010).

- Nevertheless, in the US, **18 patients die per day** while awaiting an organ
- Studies suggest that patients and surviving families and surrogates may benefit from the holistic, interdisciplinary care provided by palliative care teams, but integration is not routine

## Types of Deceased Organ Donors

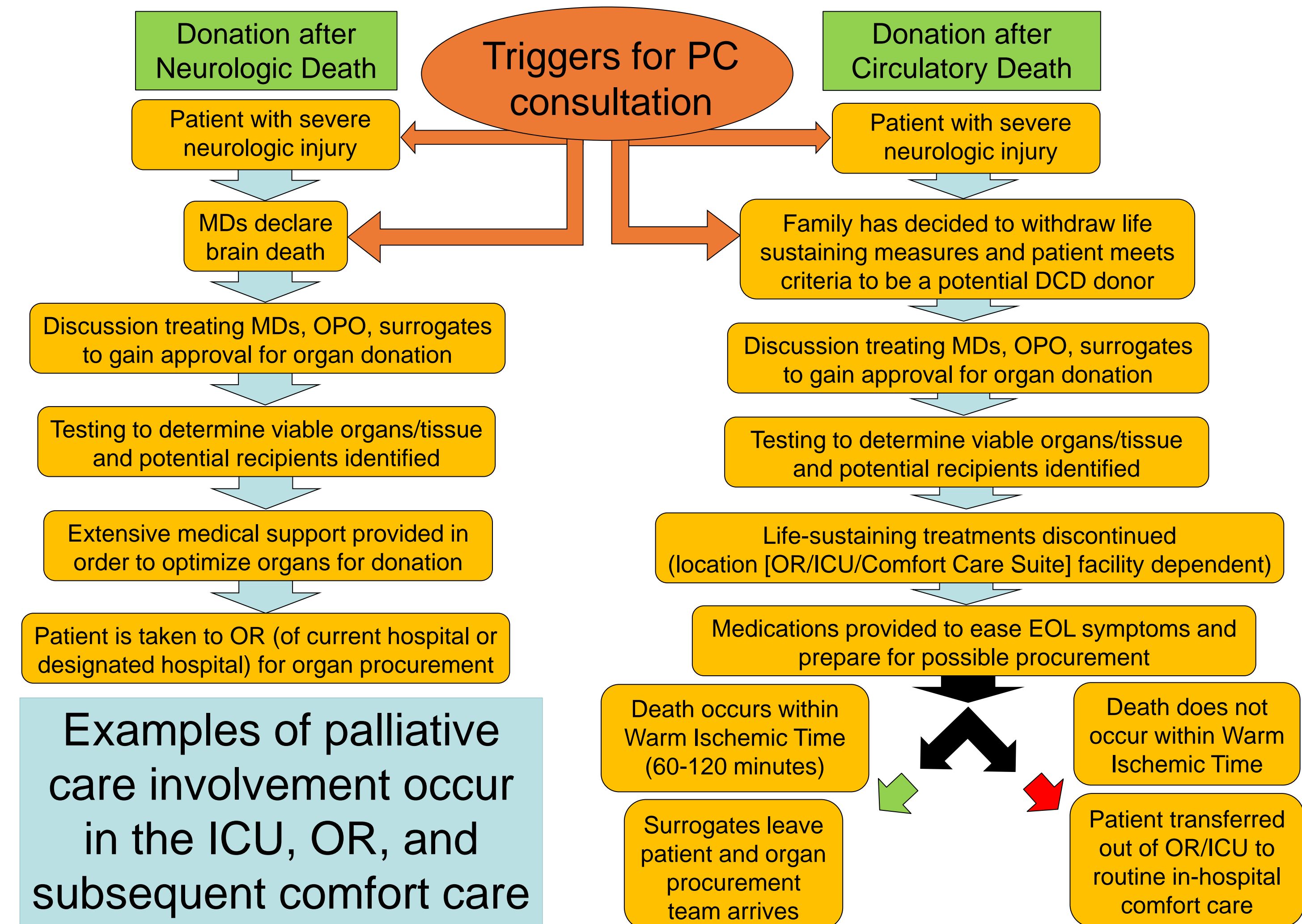
- **Donation after Neurologic Death** – neurologic injury and clinical brain death has been determined
- **Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD)** – neurologic injury, not clinically brain dead, but anticipate may pass quickly after life sustaining therapies are discontinued



## Benefits of Palliative Care

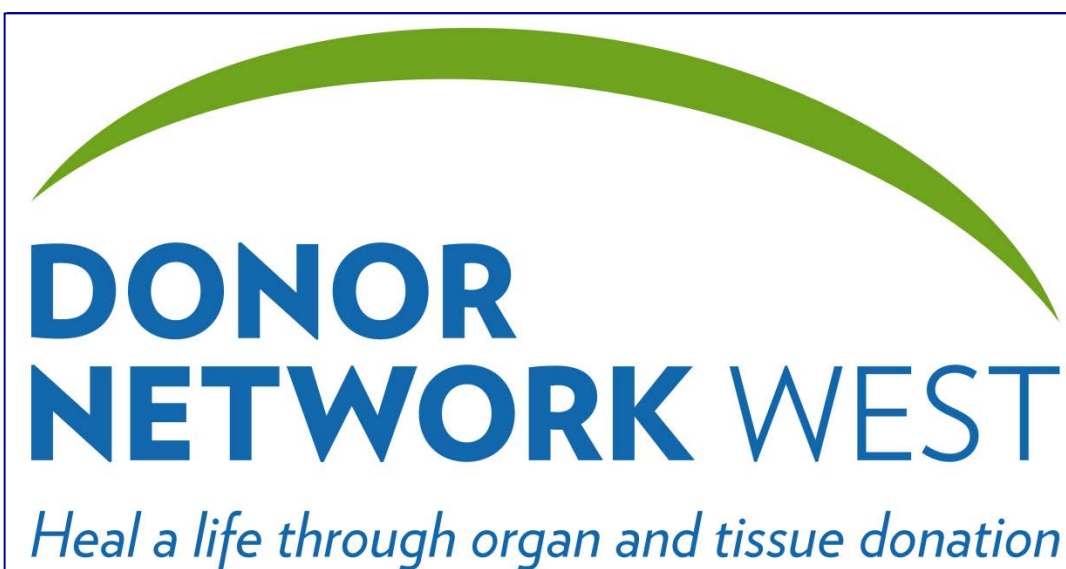
- Routine focus on multiple domains of care and a broader unit of care
- Communication around sensitive topics
- Experience with end of life care
- Expert symptom management
- Bereavement support

## Routine Integration of Palliative Care



## A Call for Greater Involvement

- Consensus statements have called for palliative care to be available and become more involved
- Recommend integration into hospital donation protocols
- Need further data regarding palliative care involvement on bereavement or mitigating distress of surrogates and health professionals involved in the organ donation process



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