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College of Physicians and Surgeons
80 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
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RE: Proposed changes to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario Policy "Planning for and Providing Quality End-of-Life Care"

To Whom it May Concern,

Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSO) policy document "Planning for and Providing Quality End-of-Life Care" (Policy). First, we wish to thank and applaud the CPSO for integrating organ and tissue donation as an important part of quality end of life care and highlighting the important role of physicians in this process. We appreciate the inclusion of a section specifically on organ and tissue donation which outlines the legislation related to donation that is currently in place and the necessary policies that healthcare professionals and hospitals must follow, when appropriate. In this letter we are proposing some additions that we believe will further enhance the Policy and ensure that organ and tissue donation is seamlessly integrated throughout quality end-of-life care. The following changes have been proposed primarily to ensure that the Policy reflects and appropriately emphasizes the importance of timing, when it comes to considering the opportunity for donation. Donation opportunities are often missed when consideration by families and physicians is carried out too far into end-of-life care.

1. Proposed Revisions

(a) Terminology

Under the 'Terminology' section of the Policy, TGLN proposes that a definition for "organ and tissue donation", be added to provide further clarity about donation, as well as integrate organ and tissue donation into planning for and providing quality end-of-life care. Specifically, it is proposed that organ and tissue donation be defined as "the donation of organ and/or tissues after death for the purposes of transplantation".

(b) Policy – Quality Care

The ‘Quality Care’ section of the Policy lays out a list of medical and non-medical elements that should comprise quality end-of-life care, based on research and clinical experience. TGLN proposes that "providing the opportunity for decision making regarding organ and tissue donation" be added to this list of elements. It is important for healthcare professionals and families to understand how donation factors into end-of-life decisions. TGLN views the opportunity for decision making regarding donation as a routine step in end-of-life care, and one that is crucial to the donation process, as it allows families and substitute decision makers a chance to uphold their loved ones’ registered donation decision so as to honor end-of-life wishes, or make a decision to donate organs and/or tissue on their loved ones’ behalf. In this regard, it is important for healthcare professionals and families to understand and consider early on in end-of-life care planning how donation may impact certain end-of-life decisions (e.g. consideration of the fact that organ donation requires a person to be mechanically ventilated for a period of time). To do otherwise may preclude the opportunity for donation.

(c) Policy – Advance Care Planning

Section 3 of the Policy discusses physician engagement of patients in advance care planning. Among other things, physicians are advised to help their patients engage in such planning so as to provide necessary medical information and the opportunity for discussion. This may include asking patients general questions about their wishes, values and beliefs regarding end-of-life care or discussing specific issues such as preferences for the location of their death, attitudes towards certain medical interventions (e.g. resuscitation, mechanical ventilation, etc.). In addition, TGLN suggests that this also include asking patients about their registered consent or expressed wishes with respect to organ and tissue donation.

In addition, as noted in section 10, physicians are advised to provide patients with the opportunity to make choices about organ and tissue donation, ideally prior to end of life. Family physicians, given their ongoing relationship with patients are well positioned to engage patients in this conversation. TGLN is interested in partnering with family physicians and providing them with resource materials to use and/or display in their practices to support this conversation. When CPSO plans to communicate this policy to the physician community, TGLN would appreciate the opportunity to include the offer of resource materials to physicians to aid and support them in patient conversations about organ and tissue donation/donor registration, as part of the broader communication.

(d) Policy – Organ and Tissue Donation

Section 10 of the Policy discusses the donation process, as prescribed by the *Trillium Gift of Life Network Act* (Act). We propose that the following note be added to the Policy to emphasize the role that physicians play in facilitating opportunities for donation (proposed changes are highlighted). We also propose a clarification of the rationale for the requirement to notify TGLN of an imminent death, and that the Act provides an exception to the notification requirement, where TGLN has established an exemption.

“As part of quality care provided at end of life, physicians enable all opportunities for their patients or substitutes to affirm or make a decision about organ and tissue donation.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network Act sets out requirements relating to organ and tissue transplantation measures for health facilities designated by the Minister of Health and Long- Term Care.

A designated facility must notify the Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) when a patient in the facility has died or a physician is of the opinion that the death of a patient at the facility is imminent by reason of injury or disease. However, the legislation provides an exception to notification if the TGLN has established exemptions for the designated facility. Notification in advance of any clinical intervention for the purposes of withdrawal of life-saving or life-sustaining treatment is required to ensure the patient's family is able to be approached and affirm the donation decision or make a decision about organ and tissue donation on the patient's behalf'.

(e) Footnotes – Organ and Tissue Donation

Please make a correction to the url and toll free number in footnote 51. The url is www.giftoflife.on.ca and the toll free number is 1-800-263-2833.

TGLN appreciates the opportunity to comment on the CPSO Policy, and looks forward to further dialogue on the important matters raised.

Regards,