

## **Tissue Donation Update August 2020**

### **Deceased Tissue Donation**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on tissue donation potential in the first four and a half months of this financial year; tissue retrieval was temporarily paused during the month of April 2020, while essential PPE was sourced for the retrieval staff; the referral rate of potential donors has dropped significantly due to the pressures on the NHS at large, although the number of referrals is now slowly increasing again; and the number of potential donors confirmed as being suitable for tissue donation, i.e. no risk of transmitting SARS-CoV-2, is low due to the need to confirm that potential deceased donors are negative for the virus on an upper respiratory swab prior to proceeding with donation. Tissue donation rate is however now once again increasing slowly but steadily.

On the other hand, clinical demand for tissue products continued during the pandemic and there is now evidence that clinical demand is likely to go back to pre-pandemic (if not higher) levels as elective procedures are re-established.

Between April and mid-August 2020 there were a total of nine tissue donors, 8 of whom had also donated organs first. Of these nine donors, six donated a total of eleven heart valves and the remaining three donors donated a further six heart valves and eighteen tendons.

### **Pancreatic Islet Programme**

The SNBTS islet isolation lab continued to process pancreata for clinical transplantation throughout the pandemic, although the potential donor numbers were significantly negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; further the number of transplants taken forward was also reduced due to concerns re the safety of recipients (due to the need for immunosuppression) during the pandemic – there were however a couple of patients that had been identified where going ahead with an islet transplant was considered to be in the patients' best interest despite the pandemic.

Between April and mid-August 2020, 7 pancreata were processed by SNBTS, of which 2 yielded a successful transplantable product, leading to a transplant on 1 occasion (the second islet product was not transplanted due to an unexpected positive cross-match between donor and intended recipient).

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