

# Candidate 8 evidence

## Essay 11

### Morality & Medicine

A beating heart cadaver is someone who is pronounced dead in all medical and legal terms and is connected to a medical ventilator, allowing all cardio-pulmonary functions to continue. This allows all circulatory and respiratory organs to remain functioning and extend the period of time the organs can be used for transplant.

A moral issue arising from this is the question of when we consider someone to be dead, meaning that if a body is still functioning in circulatory and respiratory ways then should it be considered dead when all organs, including the heart, are still functioning? A non-religious response to this is Utilitarianism. They believe in the greatest happiness for the greatest amount of people. Utilitarians support donation from beating heart cadavers as it would result in the greatest utility being that of the greatest number for the greatest amount of people awaiting transplants being satisfied. An implication of this is that due to the extended period of time that organs can be donated with a beating heart donor, then this would be a morally acceptable option as it would save lives of patients waiting for an organ transplant.

A second moral issue is pressure on medical staff. Beating heart donation poses a risk that medical professionals could pronounce someone dead too hastily in order to retrieve organs from them. A non-religious response is from NHS Scotland where they have asked that there are secure safeguards in place to ensure that this will not happen, e.g. medical staff will disconnect a body from a medical ventilator and only reconnect if the body fails to continue to function on its own. An implication of this is that Drs cannot pronounce someone dead unless proper checks and tests are carried out to ensure that the body cannot function without mechanical assistance. It also implies that beating heart donation is naturally acceptable under the state of brain death.

A third moral issue is that beating heart donation stems from beliefs about resurrection of body after death. This means that some people believe that they will need their organs for their second life so beating heart donation would not be morally acceptable. Humanists do not believe in resurrection of the body after death. They believe that humans have one life and quality of life is the most important consideration. An implication of this is that humans have a social responsibility to donate organs when they are no longer needed in order to save the life of a person in need of an organ transplant or improve the quality of life of that person, accepting that beating heart donation is a moral option.