

AN IDEAL WAY TO TREAT INDIA'S CORNEAL BLINDNESS PROBLEM

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Article summary

India faces a significant challenge in addressing corneal blindness, with an annual requirement of 100,000 corneal transplants but only 30% of this demand being met. Corneal opacities are the second leading cause of blindness in the country, affecting primarily those over 50 years old. Solutions under consideration include adopting a presumed consent system, where organs are retrieved from deceased individuals unless they explicitly opted out.

However, experts caution that this might undermine public trust in the donation process. Instead, a "required request" policy, where hospitals seek consent from families of the deceased, has shown promising results. For instance, the L.V. Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) in Hyderabad has achieved remarkable success, conducting over 50,000 transplants in a year, largely through this approach. The main challenges include a shortage of corneal surgeons, limited eye banks, and the need for public education to encourage voluntary donations. The article emphasizes the importance of a consent-driven, ethical donation system and investments in corneal transplant infrastructure to eliminate avoidable corneal blindness and meet the target of 100,000 transplants annually.

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