

CAST-Eye Bank Special Session I: Variations in Eye Banking in Different Localities - Successes and Challenges

Eye Banking in Japan

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In Japan, approximately 4,000 corneal transplants are performed annually, with over half of these depending on imported donor corneas. There is a chronic shortage of domestic organ donors, which is often attributed to the Buddhist doctrine that asserts one should not be attached to the physical body. This doctrine not only affects organ donation but also impacts the acceptance of transplant medicine itself. Although there is at least one eye bank established in each prefecture, demographic shifts including population concentration and depopulation have resulted in regional disparities in the number of donors and the quality of eye bank activities. The infrastructure for educating those involved in eye bank operations is insufficient, and the training of eye bank coordinators is an issue. There are various issues concerning eye banks, such as the working conditions for doctors involved in extracting donor corneas. As of 2020, about 28.4% of Japan's population was over the age of 65, marking it as one of the most aged societies in the world. So, donors are projected to keep aging. In this presentation, I would like to address the current issues surrounding eye banks in Japan.