

Notion of the autonomy in Japanese socio-medical context

Yoshimi KAKIMOTO (Osaka-Sangyo University)

This presentation aims to clarify the notion of the body in Japanese society where the organ transplantation from the body in the state of cerebral death is less frequent than the organ transplantation between the living bodies.

In 2009, the Act on organ transplantation is modified, mainly at the point of the donation with substituted consent of family, of the abolition of the limitation on age of donor, which make possible to transplant from a child, and of priority donation to a particular recipient.

In the discussion around the cerebral death, we can look out particular understanding of autonomy which seems distinct from the Christian culture. There is Japanese way of understanding regarding the body and the individual autonomy: the human body doesn't belong only to the individual but also to the family and in the name of autonomy, people can make a decision to prefer the interests of family to individual one. In this extension, people seem like to choose to offer their organs.

But this doesn't signify that Japanese people thinks the autonomy as uselessness notion. There is double-bind decision-making: people will not hesitate to scarify himself or herself as long as personal decision, but they hesitate to make the substitute judgment of a member of family. And in addition, people tend to think that knowing the process or the situation is more important rather than keeping a principle. Because of these ways of thinking, some people are against the organ donation from the children who are in cerebral death after the domestic violence.

In the nature of Japanese society, we may look out some of the reason why there is few case of the organ transplantation.