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Incentives for Bone Marrow

ABSTRACT

Every year roughly 130,000 people in the United States alone are diagnosed with a serious blood related disease. Many of these people die waiting on bone marrow that is an appropriate match for their genetic make-up. In this paper, I will discuss several objections on introducing market mechanisms to human organs and more specifically to bone marrow. I will argue, that because of new developments in related technology, bone marrow should be treated in the same manner as plasma, ovarian eggs, and sperm. Once this premise is justified I will discuss further philosophical objections to a market in human organs in general. There are two primary philosophical concerns. The first is the effect of the “crowding out” phenomenon, which is a scenario wherein a large amount of donors are driven away from donating due to the existence of compensatory awards for donating. The second is whether or not the appropriate moral values that one should have towards the human body are degraded from the interaction between human organs and market values. If I am correct in saying that bone marrow is morally indistinct from other human tissues that are legally marketable and if my responses to the broader philosophical objections are sufficient then there is no reason to continue to ban bone marrow under the National Organ Transplant Act. I will have shown that there is no reason to restrict hospitals and certain other organizations from providing compensation to a consenting donor of bone marrow. I believe that the risks involved in incentive based bone marrow donation are minimal and to endorse the status quo is to be complicit in the deaths of the many children, families, and neighbors who we share this country with.