



Letter to the editor

Social science perspectives on liver transplantation - The author's reply to the rebuttal



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I am writing to provide additional context and clarification in response to the recent publication titled “A revealing scandal: The German transplant scandal between structural failures, moralizing rules, and ambivalent manipulations” [1] as well as to the correspondence surrounding it in this journal.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize that the article is part of a special issue on social sciences' perspectives on liver transplantation. In the spirit of scientific discourse, it is important to recognize that biomedicine and social anthropology highlight different ways of knowing and understanding the world. Social anthropology takes a more interpretive and contextual approach, recognizing that knowledge is shaped by social positions, cultural perspectives and subjective experiences. It explores the different ways in which societies construct meaning and provides a nuanced understanding of how ‘culturally infused assumptions are embedded in scientific knowledge, health policymaking, and clinical care’ [2]. Anthropological analyses, often presented in single-authored papers, are not mere opinion pieces but scientific contributions based on methodologies and epistemologies distinct from biomedical research traditions.

Secondly, I am grateful for the detailed information on the timeline and the clarifications on the policy related to the six-month abstinence rule provided by Nashan [3]. In future discussions or publications on the matter, I will consider incorporating this information.

Lastly, I would like to clarify my position on the link between the low donation rate and the transplant scandal. In my article, I mention that the scandal coincided with a decline in the number of donor organs, which led to media reports citing loss of public trust as one of the main reasons for the decline – reports that significantly shaped the public debate [e.g. 4-6]. This serves as an illustrative example of the complex interplay between public perception, media influence, and organ donation rates, and of the value of looking at these issues from an anthropological perspective that pays attention to contextual factors and surrounding circumstances. I fully agree with Nashan [3] that the issue of low donation rates is much more complex than most media reports make it out to be, and that ‘structural deficits in the identification and registration of possible donors’ [7] are one of the main reasons for low donation rates.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Julia Rehsman: Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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