

OPINION PAGES

GUEST VIEW

Hard call Transplant policy prioritizes lives

From The Indianapolis Star.

Mickey Mantle's death shortly after receiving a donor liver raised questions about the propriety and fairness of some transplant operations.

Mantle suffered from cirrhosis for several years and had been advised numerous times by his doctors to quit drinking.

There was a perception, warranted or not, that Mantle's name and money got him the organ. Given his history, his age and general health, the transplant was considered by some to be imprudent, even wasteful.

At the bottom of such thinking is the fact that there aren't nearly enough livers available for people who desperately need them. About 7,200 people are on waiting lists, and each day eight to 10 of them die for lack of a suitable donor.

That situation won't change under the new policy approved by the United Network for Organ Sharing, which sets nationwide policies for all organ transplants. What will change is the category of patient that will receive liver donations.

People suffering from chronic liver failure due to alcoholism or hepatitis will be purged from the top of waiting lists. Hepatitis is common among intravenous drug users.

Persons with acute liver illness — those who became ill suddenly and are expected to die within two weeks — will be given priority status. In some cases, the sickest patient will be considered even if he or she is not in critical condition.

Supporters say the change was prompted by the continuing shortage of donors, not by allegations that money and prestige played a part in such highly publicized transplants as those of Mantle, actor Larry Hagman and former Pennsylvania Gov. Robert Casey.

They aren't trying to punish alcoholics or drug users, supporters contend, but favor groups that can benefit most from a transplant and can be counted on to observe good postoperative health care.

The selectivity, however, bothers some physicians. One noted that those being purged are often the most critically ill.

Weeding them out, he said, is tantamount to refusing to treat smokers for lung cancer or obese people for heart ailments.

That would be the case if there were no shortage of donors, but there is. By contrast, there is no shortage of treatment facilities for cancer and heart patients.

Deciding who will live or die is a dreadful responsibility, one that becomes more burdensome as medicine advances. The change in liver transplant policy is bad news for some groups but it is a reasonable response to the anguishing imbalance between supply and demand.

CARTOONIST'S VIEW

At the first sign of winter weather:



LETTERS

MODEM MANIA

Elimination of the dial-in modem pool (DN Dec. 5) is a giant step backward for the university, taken at a time when all resources should be focused on making UNL, and Nebraska, for that matter, a stopping place on the burgeoning information superhighway.

Contrary to the current plan, the modem pool should be renewed and updated and (as has been done at other schools) students should be offered lifetime access to the Internet through the university system. Any other plan is shortsighted and mistaken.

The 21st century is not a science fiction possibility but a real and present opportunity which the university rejects to its detriment. Where, today, are all the little towns the railroad passed up in 1896?

Mark Baldrige
senior
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JASON GILDOW/DN

IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE

Something that has always baffled me is the (unfortunately) common notion that if someone has a different opinion, then that person must be wrong and must therefore be subject to personal attack and ridicule. This defies all logic. Are we so insecure in our own beliefs that we have to vindictively oppose any others?

I'm referring to Nick Wiltgen's column on the role of morality in government (DN Nov. 26) and the ensuing replies from the community. Any debate or problem has many angles to it, and he was just voicing a logical, lucid argument of his stance. If you don't agree: fine, don't agree. If you do agree: fine, agree. But if you don't agree and you want to voice your opinion as a rebuttal, then at least have the fortitude to take the time to learn the facts, create a concise logical argument and politely counter the points he made. This

TOP-NOTCH WORK

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Anthony Nguyen for writing such intelligent and well-written columns for the Daily Nebraskan. I have saved and shared many of these columns with friends here in Lincoln and throughout the United States.

His latest column on Dec. 2 concerning the United Nations and the United States especially deserves to be re-read over and over again.

Thanks once again for writing such well thought-out and intelligent columns! There are like a breath of fresh air!

I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Jim Anderson
Nebraskans for Peace

goes for any debate, not just this one.

For the first reply, we had a journalism professor lay into Nick, basically saying that this column was a front for the legalization of alcohol for minors, and that Nick should be ashamed of himself, etc. I have to question where this teacher got his degree because he did not display any of the journalistic skill that earned his position. Where was his argument? What points was he trying to make in relation to the column written? He simply blew Nick's example out of proportion and then personally attacked him.

The second reply by Brett Otte was similar in nature, although he had more validity to his statements. He did unnecessarily attack Nick, but did provide thoughtful counter examples. Brett saw that this argument has many applications (abortion, gun control, drinking, welfare, prostitution, drugs and any law ever legislated that relates to public safety) and that, to be honest, it does have loopholes.

Nick's column made me think — and I'm sure a lot of people can at least agree on that point. He composed an argument for how much morality the government should legislate and where it should draw the line. This debate has been going on for millenia and applies to almost every aspect of our lives. It is shortsighted to believe that he would spend his time thinking of ways to persuade America's public to legalize drinking for all ages. This is an institute of higher learning, and personal attacks on anyone don't engender learning nor do they invite much respect for the wisdom of the attacker.

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