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HOW SHOULD DOCTORS CHOOSE RECIPIENTS FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTS?

Word Generation - Unit 3.18

Focus Words

intrinsic | commodity | practitioner | evaluate | infer



Weekly Passage

In 2001, Tadamasa Goto came to the United States for a liver transplant at UCLA Medical Center. The transplant saved his life. Goto returned to Japan, where he leads a Yakuza gang called the Goto-gumi. His gang is said to engage in theft, blackmail, assault, and even murder. Many people were shocked and angry to hear that Goto had received a new liver. Healthy organs are a valuable commodity. Each year, thousands of Americans die waiting for organ transplants.

Goto did not break any rules to obtain the liver. In the United States, healthy organs are given to the sickest people, not the people who have waited the longest. Still, some people feel that the hospital should have denied Goto a new liver because of his criminal activities. Other people believe organs should not go to non-Americans. American taxpayers help fund American hospitals, and some people believe that these hospitals should help Americans first.

There are also those who think that the hospital acted correctly. They believe Goto has the same rights as any other patient. They do not want medical practitioners to evaluate whether patients are good or

bad people. Many religions and belief systems say that each person has intrinsic value, no matter who they are or what they have done. Doctors try to honor this intrinsic value by treating all sick people, even criminals, with equal care and respect.

Additionally, people who support Goto's transplant remind us that no one can accurately predict how a person will act in the future. While we might infer from Goto's past behavior that he may continue his criminal activities, no one knows for sure. Although some people believe that helping him live longer will just allow Goto to hurt more people, others say that he could repent and become a law-abiding person.

Interestingly, people born outside the United States donate about 20% of the UCLA medical center's healthy organs. According to a UCLA doctor, denying transplants to foreigners could discourage these donations. About 95% of the hospital's healthy organs are given to Americans.

What do you think? How should doctors decide who gets healthy organs?

Unit 3.18 - How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?

Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
commodity	(n.) - something that is bought and sold			
practitioner	(n.) - person who practices a profession			
evaluate	(v.) - to decide the value or worth of			
intrinsic	(adj.) - essential or natural to something			
infer	(v.) - to guess, with some evidence for			

Unit 3.18 - How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?



Problem of the Week

Option 1: Human organs are a valuable **commodity**. Many people need a new heart, liver, or kidney to live. When an organ becomes available, medical **practitioners** must **evaluate** which patients would be good hosts. This process is based on the belief that each person has **intrinsic** value; the goal is to save as many lives as possible.

As of December 24, 2009, there were one hundred five thousand six hundred thirty-nine people waiting for organ transplants. Which answer shows this number written in standard form?

- A) 105,693
- B) 105,693,000
- C) 105,639
- D) 106,593

Option 2: Some people think that valuable **commodities** like human hearts and livers that are donated to American hospitals should all go to American patients. Since U.S. dollars fund the hospitals, these people **infer** that the hospitals should help only Americans. Some other people find the idea of turning away foreign patients who need organs shocking. Is a sick French, Mexican, or Nigerian child worth less than a sick American child? Don't hospitals have an **intrinsic** duty to help everyone they can, regardless of where patients come from? One medical **practitioner** at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) medical center says that helping foreign patients actually benefits Americans. **Evaluate** the following:

Foreigners donate about 20% of the organs transplanted at UCLA's medical center. About 95% of all organs transplanted go to Americans. If UCLA stopped offering organs to foreign patients, people from other countries might stop donating their organs to UCLA. Based on these percentages, what could we expect to happen to the number of organs available for transplant if UCLA only served American patients?

Math Discussion Question: Since there are not enough organs to go around, some people get new organs while others die waiting for them. Doctors **evaluate** which patients have the best chance of survival. They try to save as many lives as they can. However, in developing countries like Bangladesh, Haiti, and Ethiopia, **commodities** like clean water and medicine can be just as scarce, and just as important, as a heart or kidney. **Practitioners** of all the world's major religions believe that all people have **intrinsic** worth. Some people **infer** from this that we should help people when we can. A heart can save someone's life, but so can \$5 for antibiotics. Is making decisions about who gets organs similar to making decisions about giving money to organizations that help poor people survive, like Oxfam or The Red Cross, or is it different?

How should doctors choose recipients for organ transplants?

Debating the Issue



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A The hospital should have denied treatment to Tadamasa Goto. Livers are a scarce commodity, and foreign criminals should not get organs before Americans who obey the law.

B The hospital should have denied treatment to Tadamasa Goto. We can infer from Goto's past actions that he will continue to hurt people in the future.

C It was right for the hospital to give Tadamasa Goto a new liver. All sick people deserve equal care and respect.

D It was right for the hospital to give Tadamasa Goto a new liver. Doctors should not make medical decisions based on inferences about whether patients are good or bad people.

E _____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

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Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

In the United States, donated organs are a scarce **commodity** and there aren't enough for everybody who needs one. On average, 18 Americans die every day who were waiting for a donated organ. To help solve this problem, **intrinsically** generous people can easily sign up to be organ donors when they apply for or renew their driver's licenses. After a registered organ donor dies, their organs can save the lives of up to 8 people!

Some organs can also be donated safely from a living person. For example, we have two kidneys but most people only need one kidney to stay healthy. If someone is dying and needs a new kidney, one of their relatives often offers to donate one.

These family members **infer** that they would be the best donors because relatives are genetically similar. **Practitioners** were unsure whether relatives really were the best donors. The professors decided to **evaluate** the data to see if the family members were correct.

Question:

Are kidney transplants from family donors more effective than kidneys donated from strangers?

Hypothesis:

Kidneys donated by family members are more effective than kidneys donated by strangers.

Materials:

- ▶ Data from organ registry

Data:

Donor Source	Family member: Brother or Sister	Family member: Parent	Stranger
% of successful kidney transplants	95%	90%	92%

http://www.kidney.org/news/newsroom/fs_new/25factsorgdon&trans.cfm

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better study?



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

intrinsic | commodity | practitioner | evaluate | infer

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

☐ Used 2-5 focus words

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