

# "Brain Dead" Man Recovers Before Doctors Can Take His Organs

by Steven Ertelt | LifeNews.com | 4/26/12 11:42 AM

In what is becoming a more common theme, doctors rushed too fast to attempt to take the organs of a man who was thought to be "brain dead" but recovered — this time thanks in part to the dedication of his family.

As the London Daily Mail [reports](#):

They were told there was no chance of their son surviving after he suffered devastating injuries in a car crash. But Steven Thorpe's parents refused to give up hope – despite four specialists declaring that the 17-year-old was brain dead.

Convinced they saw a 'flicker' of life as Steven lay in a coma, John and Janet Thorpe rejected advice to switch off his life support machine. They begged for another opinion – and it was a decision that saved him. A neurosurgeon found faint signs of brain activity and two weeks later, Steven woke from his coma. Within seven weeks, he had left hospital. And four years on, the trainee accounts clerk says he owes everything to the persistence of his parents.



The schoolboy was traveling in a Rover with two friends in February 2008 when a stray horse ran into the path of the car in front of them. His friend Matthew Jones, 18, was killed in the accident. Steven suffered serious injuries to his face, head and arm, and was declared brain dead two days later.

He said: 'The doctors were telling my parents that they wanted to take me off the life support. The words they used to my parents were "You need to start thinking about organ donations".'

'I think that's what gave my dad energy. He thought "No way". They still believed I was there. When they sat around the bed they had the feeling I was there and some words they said to me I reacted to. 'I think if my dad had agreed with them then I would have been off the life support machine in seconds.'

The case reminds of one that received attention in December in which a 20-year-old man awoke from a coma just hours before doctors were ready to shut off life support and take his organs for donation purposes.

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Sam Schmid, an Arizona college student who was thought to be brain dead, recovered from injuries sustained in an automobile accident in October just hours before he was slated to be killed and his organs given to other patients.

The accident took the life of his best friend and college roommate and Schmid's injuries were thought to be so grievous that a local hospital could not treat him and he was sent to Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Phoenix to receive surgery for a life-threatening aneurysm.

As hospital officials began palliative care and talked with his parents about organ donation, Schmid began to hold up two fingers on command and started walking with the aid of a walker. Now, his speech has improved and doctors say he will have a complete recovery.

The case provides yet another example of what pro-life bioethicists like [Wesley J. Smith have warned](#) about misjudging patients as too far gone too soon and relegating them to organ donor status:

For years, organ transplant ethicists and some in the bioethics community have agitated to change the definition of death from a purely biological determination, to one based in utilitarianism and desired sociological narratives. Why mess with death? Too few organs are donated for transplant, leading to long waiting lines and the deaths of some people who might be saved were organs more readily available.

But why redefine death? The point of this reckless advocacy — although they don't put it this bluntly — is that there are thousands of perfectly good organs being used by people who really don't need them anymore, by which they mean patients with profound cognitive impairments who will remain unconscious or minimally aware for the rest of their lives. Why not harvest such patients, this thinking goes, for the benefit of people who could return to normal lives?

The problem is that would break the "dead donor rule," the legal and moral pact organ transplant medicine made with society promising that vital organs would only be harvested from patients who are truly dead. Hence, if the definition of death were loosened to include, say, a diagnosis of persistent vegetative state, more organs could be obtained — and the dead donor rule could still appear to be honored, deemed essential for transplant medicine to retain the trust of society.

Of course, that would be fiction, and the redefinition actually a betrayal. What these "ethicists" really propose is killing for organs, a view now being promoted in some of the world's most prestigious medical, science, and bioethical journals. For example, Nature recently editorialized in favor of liberalizing the rules governing brain death.

Currently, brain death requires the irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain and each of its constituent parts. Nature's editorial claimed — without proof — that doctors obey "the spirit but not the letter, of this law. And many are feeling uncomfortable about it."