

China attracting those needing organs

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China reportedly is attracting hundreds of Americans and other foreigners desperately in need of organ transplants, raising some ethical questions.

Some human rights activists fear these organs are being taken from executed prisoners, reports the San Francisco Chronicle. Patients are finding these transplant centers through online search.

These patients also are going to India and the Philippines because of the long wait they have to endure in their home countries. In 2004, out of the about 17,000 Americans needing liver transplants, only 6,100 patients received them, the report said.

U.S. doctors caution their patients against going overseas for transplants because the organs may not be screened for infectious diseases and the quality of care after surgery.

Human rights activists are particularly concerned about China, saying transplant doctors there, interested in financial gain, may be harvesting the organs from executed prisoners without their permission, the report said.

A spokesman at the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., said new rules going into effect in July will explicitly forbid the buying and selling of organs in China. But critics say the new rules still fail to address the source of the organs and the definition of "brain dead."

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