Children, organ donation and Islam: a report of a multi-disciplinary day

1M Aktas, 2R Kazmi, 1J Brieler, 1Durham University, Durham, UK; 2Chaplaincy Department, Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, UK; 1Department of Paediatric Bioethics, Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, UK.

Purpose
The day was established to look at organ donation in the Muslim community from deceased children. The BAME population has a lower rate of organ donation, but an increased need for transplantation – though this is known in children. Anecdotally, some Muslim parents and academics have suggested that organ donation is forbidden whereas other Muslim scholars think it acceptable: Two main sects: Shia – Many scholars think organ donation and receipt permissible, though some suggest it’s only permissible if organs go to Muslims. Sunni – Some scholars do not accept brain death as human death. Re donation there are three main groups: donation permissible, not permitted or it is a ‘grey area.’

Methods
We explored these views in a multi-disciplinary and faith dialogue day with religious scholars, organ donation/transplant specialties, young people, and hospital chaplains. Themes in child-donation/transplantation emerged: need for organs; the demographics of child death and donation; the respectful process of donation in the setting of end-of-life care; retrieval and transplant of organs; paradox between families agreeing to transplant who would not agree to donation. Both Sunni and Shia scholars explored their faith views about these issues and particularly the voice of the Prophet that forbade desecration of bodies. Anecdotally, some suggest it is only permissible if organs go to Muslims.

Results
A panel convened to review the issues and find a way forward: (i) In general all felt the decision about whether to accept brain death as a definition of death was for the law for country to determine. (ii) Organ donation was a matter that should be decided by the parents of the child. (iii) No attendees felt organ donation to be forbidden by any religious orthodoxy, and that as Islam is a way of life represented by generosity, organ donation is acceptable – not least as most people will accept a transplant if they need one for them, or their child.

Conclusions
A leaflet for families about the Islamic views of donation is to be made. Muslim children who have received a transplant and the chaplains/scholars present together with donation/transplant staff will arrange education sessions in Mosques for families and the community.