Views on Brain Health in Solid Organ Transplant Candidates and Recipients

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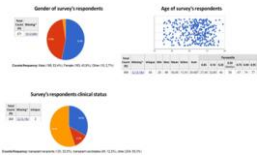
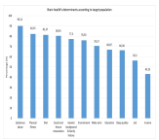
Background and Objectives

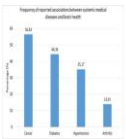
- There is the concrete risk that a neurological comorbidity or complication in a solid organ transplant (SOT) candidate or recipient may influence peri-operative outcomes, thus leading to a suboptimal success of the procedure.
- We investigated how our specific population of patients, affected by extracranial diseases but carrying a high risk of neurological impairment, perceived the importance of *brain health* as well as their health literacy on neurological diseases, lifestyle choices, barriers to making lifestyle changes, availability to perform cognitive screenings and receive educational material on brain health [1-3].

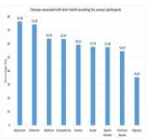
Materials and Methods

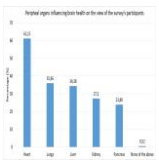
Following the model of the largest brain health survey (*Global Brain Health Survey*) launched by the *Lifebrain consortium* in 2019 [4], we reproduced a similar interview among patients attending an outpatient clinic at a SOT center. The survey was included in a *Brain Health brochure* and launched on 22 July 2024 during the *World Brain Day*, dedicated to promoting *Brain Health and Prevention*. This study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology to review the answers received through a pencil and paper survey conducted in a single highly specialized surgical center. Gender, age, and clinical status differences in brain health awareness were included in our analysis.

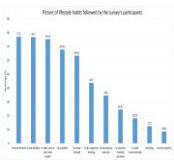


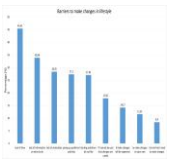












Just over half of our respondents, mostly women, reported always or often thinking about their brain health. Just over half of our patients exercise regularly and undertake cognitively stimulating activities, with this figure being even lower for older patients and men. *There is scant public awareness and health literacy on neurology and brain diseases*. We have found full recognition that peripheral organ functioning, above all the heart, may have an impact on brain health. *Lack of time, lack of information on what to do, and lack of motivation emerged as the principal barriers to enforcing lifestyle changes*. Most of our respondents were willing to undergo a cognitive screening test and receive educational information on brain health.

Discussion and Conclusion

- Multidomain interventional programs to preserve brain health before and after a transplant could ensure to maintain transplant eligibility, and full compliance with the demanding postoperative immunosuppression regimen and care required.
- As a first step toward a personalized brain health program in the transplant centres, we gathered all information derived interviewing our patients.
- We realized that educational campaigns on brain health topic are necessary to increase health literacy for brain-related disorders as well as engaging patients in all lifestyle choices, as cognitive stimulating activities, they overlook.
- It is the healthcare professional's responsibility to think of solutions to overcome perceived barriers to taking part in brain health programs.
- As a positive note, even in non-neurological settings, people are willing to learn more about brain health and to undergo screening assessment.

Our survey provided insights on brain health topic previously unexplored among patients affected by non-neurological disorders.
The gathered results will be used to implement multidomain interventional brain health plans for transplant candidates and recipients.

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