Racial and ethnic disparities in access to and utilization of living donor liver transplants

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Background
- LDLT is an important alternative to deceased donor liver transplantation (DDLT).
- In kidney transplantation, reduced use of living donors is well-documented among racial/ethnic minorities.
- Limited data regarding racial/ethnic disparities in LDLT exist, and previous studies do not explore factors limiting potential donors.

Objectives
- Characterize national racial/ethnic discrepancies in access to living donor liver transplantation (LDLT) using national data.
- Identify obstacles faced by potential racial/ethnic minority donors using data from two large urban transplant centers.

Methods
- **National study sample**: Adult liver transplant recipients at LDLT-capable centers from 2/27/2002 - 6/4/2014 using UNOS data.
- **Transplant center study samples**: All potential living donor inquiries at Penn Transplant Institute (2010-2014) and Yale-New Haven Transplantation Center (2008-2012).
- **Inquiry**: Any person who asked about living donation via phone or e-mail, or completed health screening questionnaire.
- **Analyses**: Multivariable GEE models evaluating outcome of LDLT based on race/ethnicity.
- **Covariates**: Age, sex, MELD score, history of SBP, ascites, HE, weight, rural/urban status, zip-code level poverty, insurance, and functional status.

Results
- **35,401 adult transplant recipients at LDLT-capable centers; 2,171 (6.1%) of these received LDLT.**
- **LDLT**: 71.1% white, 13.8% Hispanic, 9.1% black. LDLT: 83.4% white, 9.7% Hispanic, 3.5% black.

Conclusions
- **Racial/ethnic minorities were significantly less likely than white patients to receive LDLTs.**
- **Black patients may be less likely than white patients to have a potential donor inquiry.**
- **Among patients who did receive at least one inquiry**
  - **White patients had an average of two times as many potential donors as black patients.**
  - **This represents a major inequality in access to a vital healthcare resource and demands outreach to both patients and potential donors.**