

Health and Fitness

1,100 people die waiting for organ and tissue donations

Talk may be cheap, but it can also save lives, particularly when that talk is about organ and tissue donation.

This year, more Canadians than ever before will be talking about organ donation, thanks to By Mutual Consent, a public awareness program developed by The Mutual Group.

This month, the Canadian life insurer is asking Canadians to have a talk that will insure the lives of thousands of Canadians are enhanced or saved.

The Mutual Group, in partnership with the transplant community, has designated **April 24 as National Organ Donation Discussion Day.**

On this day Canadian families are encouraged to discuss their feelings about organ and tissue donation so that in the event of an emergency, everyone is clear about what their loved one's wishes are.

"The decision to become an organ and tissue donor is only one half of the equation," said Bob Astley, president and chief executive officer of The Mutual Group. "If their wish is to be fulfilled, Canadians have to go one step further and share their decision with their loved ones."

Ironically, a survey, conducted on behalf of the By Mutual Consent program revealed that 90 per cent of Canadians agree with the principle of donating their organs. However, each year, only about 400 of 1,500 potential donors actually provide organs and tissue for transplantation.

"In many cases people who have signed organ donor cards do not become donors," said Kim Gibb Young, president of the Canadian

Association of Transplantation. "During an emergency an accident victim's wallet is often not immediately recovered and distraught family members unaware of their loved one's wish to become a donor."

Organ and tissue donations can often enhance and even save lives. "Surgeons perform wonders during transplant operations and the results speak for themselves," said Astley. "The real tragedy is that more operations can't be scheduled because many potential donors have not told their families about their wishes to donate."

All Canadian families are being asked to put aside some time on April 24 to have one of the most significant conversations they will ever have.



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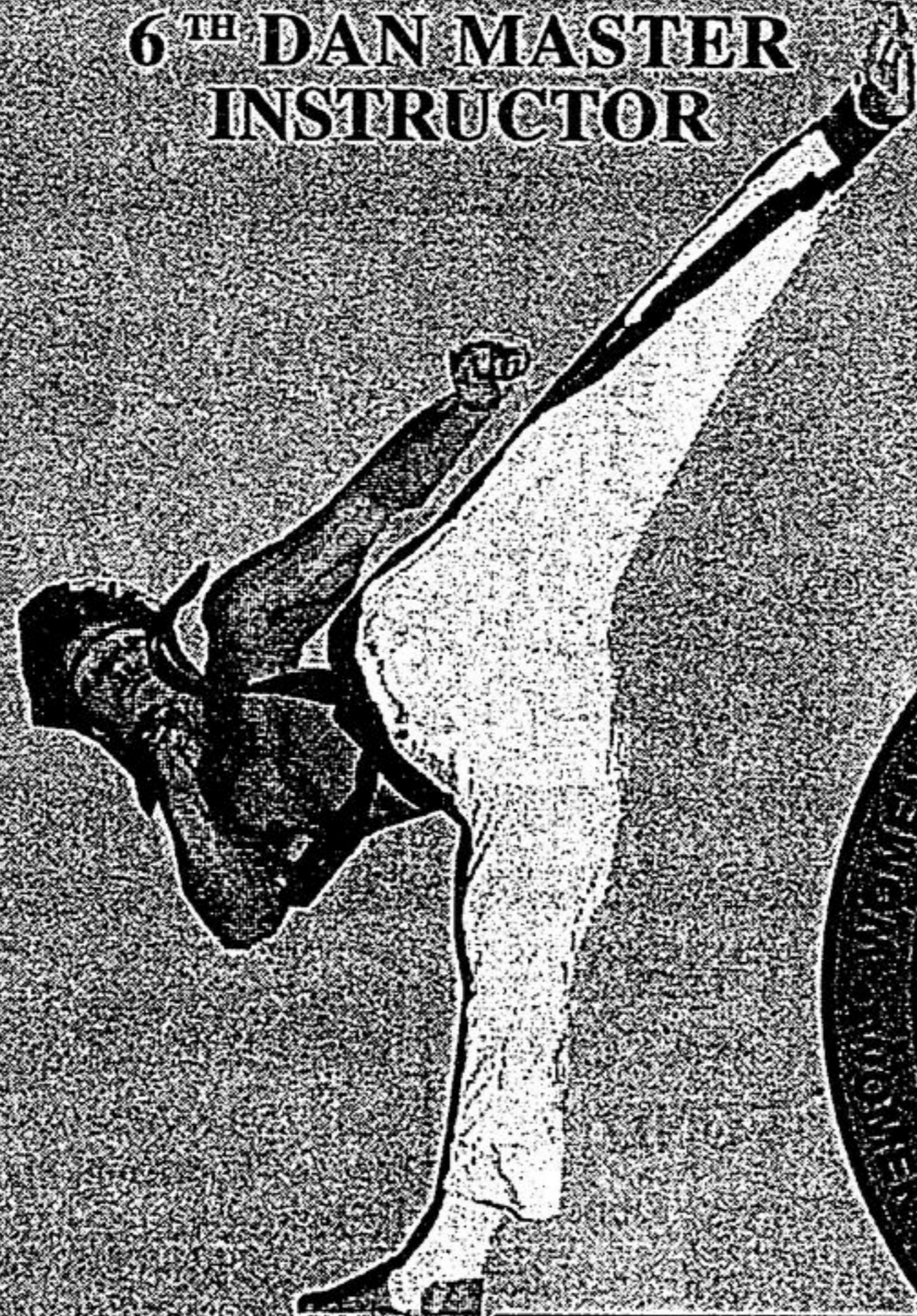
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The following are some tips to start a conversation about organ donating.

✓ Deciding to donate your organs is a two-step process. You can make a decision to be an organ donor, but sharing your wishes with your family is as important as making the decision itself.

✓ Tell your family why you have made this decision and why it's important to you that they carry out your wishes.

✓ Becoming an organ donor can save as many as 25 lives, yet only a small fraction of the relatives of potential donors allow organ donation to take place.

✓ Organ donation gives the gift of life to others. Carrying out your wish can also provide your family with great comfort in the time of grief.

✓ Take action - a simple blood test will save lives.

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