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NEWS RELEASE

WOMEN STILL MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO DONATE ORGANS, BUT NEW STUDY SHOWS MEN CAN BE PERSUADED BY EMOTIONAL APPEALS

DAYTON, Ohio — Women are more likely than men to say they would donate a kidney to a patient making an electronic plea on the Internet site, MatchingDonors.com, but University of Dayton researchers discovered another crucial gender difference.

Women responded more positively than expected to patient profiles written in a rational, matter-of-fact style. Men, defying stereotype, reacted more positively to emotional appeals.

Portions of the study will be presented **Friday, Nov. 18** in Boston at the National Communication Association conference. It's significant because the 89,000 American patients each day awaiting news of a transplant know their odds are better if more people, particularly men, stepped up and donated. Male organs are less likely to be rejected.

The need for transplant organs remains at a crisis level. Each day, only 74 patients receive new organs, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

"There are not enough available organs here or around the globe," said Teresa Thompson, professor of communication at the University of Dayton, who has completed 10 organ donation studies — almost all with colleague James D. Robinson and graduate communication students. She will present an overview of their research, "Gender Differences in Organ Donation Appeals," at **noon on Wednesday, Nov. 9**, at the Colloquium for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Dayton. The session will be held in the Women's Center conference room in **Alumni Hall 212** on campus.

"Consistent with all of our research, women are more oriented toward relationships and connections, and men are more oriented toward status and competition. In general, men are not as inclined to want to give something away," said Thompson, who edits the international journal

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Health Communication. "In our studies, we've found that they are more likely to have mistaken perceptions, such as believing that hospitals are more likely to give you less care if you're an organ donor."

Their new findings about what kind of messages appeal to men and women could be beneficial to organizations working to increase the number of organ donors.

"In terms of message strategies, one size does not fit all," Thompson and Robinson write. "Perhaps males responded more strongly to the narrative messages than had been hypothesized because they were more able to perceive themselves as helping someone who told the story behind their need rather than just giving the blunt facts. Perhaps females responded more to the rational appeals because the detail communicated within them made clear the magnitude of the disease and, thus, built empathy in that way."

Researchers tested eight messages — four with a high potential to create empathy and four with a low potential — in anonymous questionnaires completed by 406 participants who were, on average, between the ages of 31 and 40. The more empathetic messages did lead to more positive responses.

Thompson and Robinson say future research should measure attitudes about actual organ donation. While their survey results indicate generally positive attitudes toward organ donations and to the patients in the profiles, many respondents say they are reluctant to donate a kidney to a stranger — likely out of fear they'll need it for a family member or concern about potential health complications.

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For media interviews, contact **Teri Thompson** at (937) 229-2379.