

**From:** Kevin VanderZyl  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 25, 2023  
**To:** Thumma, Sam  
**Subject:** Legal definition of "brain death"

Dear Judge Samuel Thumma,

Thank you for the work you are doing to challenge this issue legally.

Having read the article from Lifesite News about the battle around the legal definition of Brain death I decided to respond to the request for input.

I thought providing a real life story from the parent's perspective may be helpful?

Our story around organ donation began in the summer of 2014. Three and a half years earlier we had lost a 10yr old son in a farming accident; then on a stormy summer night on the first of August our oldest son of 20 yrs old, was traveling a short distance between a friend's home and his on his quad. It was 1:00am, dark and a lightning storm. He was turning a corner transitioning from gravel to pavement when his quad flipped, pinning him under the machine with one arm pinched under a tire. The pressure of another tire was on his neck and he was unable to dislodge himself from this position. Within 20 minutes, after trying to call with his cell phone (in an area with very poor cell service) he went into a coma.

He was found after, what we calculate to be 20 minutes and was resuscitated, but he never gained consciousness again.

He was rushed by ambulance to a hospital 20 minutes away where they immediately did not give us much hope. They did the pain test in his nail bed and he did not respond.

He was then transferred to a big city hospital (The Edmonton Stollery Hospital) where he was placed in intensive care. There we quickly had visits from specialists telling us that his general health was good, he had not sustained any serious injury anywhere in his body. He had several deep gashes on his face and his two front teeth were broken. A plastic surgeon assured us that it was a simple surgery to repair those injuries.

The accident happened on a Saturday morning early, and by Saturday night they already were advising us that we should prepare for the fact that there was no hope.

We were very overwhelmed with this news and had many, many visits to process all this information with them and family and friends. Saturday afternoon he did make some bodily movements but that slowly quit.

Monday they established that his eyes had dilated and he was not responding to any pain tests. They were doing many scans on his brain and they would show them to us on light screens. It felt like the first time I had ever had an ultrasound done and trying to see what they intended to show us. We could not see any difference in the scans which they seemed to see.

Being Christians we asked if it was possible for us to have a gospel message in the form of a poem written in a card given along with each donation. This they gladly accepted and praised us for considering; read our poem and loved it.

We met with them to do paperwork, all the while talking about our heart being set on this request as a kind of caveat for the decision. We had many assurances that they accepted our request.

On Wednesday they said they would do the breathing test to remove the lifesupport to see if he could breath on his own at all, if he would respond within the time limit they allowed. I did notice during that day that his eyes swelled and he did not look himself. They said his brain could be beginning to die off. Their care of him was exceptional and we appreciated that a lot. He was taken care of by one young nurse who especially was kind and caring. She began asking personal questions about him and when I asked what she thought of his prognosis she didn't say much, and shrugged her shoulders lightly. These are all things that I had to think of later, when it was all over. Another thing that stands out in my mind is the fact that we had been having a difficult time in one relationship that hurt our son deeply. When this particular family member came to visit on the Thursday afternoon a tear escaped from the corner of his eye. We all noticed and the person questioned it.

On the Friday our family gathered to remove the lifesupport and then went home. My husband stayed behind to wait for them to say the procedure was completed. It was very painful for him that this oldest son - a strong construction worker could go from healthy and robust to allowing this crew to harvest 70 donations from his healthy body because his brain was no longer functioning. The 70 donations from his body including tissue, tendons, eyes, lungs, kidneys, liver, and bone, but not his heart. We supplied them with that number of cards with this message inside:

This precious gift to you came at a price to us.  
We had to lose our son so that you could receive it.  
We will gladly give it because of the gift we have received.  
Which is far more price. It also came at a price,  
Of Someone's life, - our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
His gift to us not only extends our earthly life  
But gives the promise of eternal life.  
- please make it your life's goal to find that Greatest Gift.  
In the end it will mean far more to you than the gift  
We gave today. "For God so loved the world,  
That He gave us only Son, that whoever believes in Him  
Should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

A few weeks later we received a phone call that we had to know that the team making the decision around our situation had a meeting and had decided that the message in our card was put into question. They decided that it would be difficult for a recipient to heal when they knew that we had had this on our heart when we donated.

When they realized over a few weeks that we struggled deeply with this information they offered that we could change the message and then they would reconsider. We had been going through many difficult times after the death of our son, including a courtcase, and were completely overwhelmed by this all. We eventually just decided to leave it behind and try to find healing somehow.

In January of 2020 a dear friend was diagnosed with GillianBare and was in that same area of the city hospital. We had not been there since our son died and when she called asking that I come, we went. We did, at that time go to the intensive care unit where our son had been and in person asked if there was any information we could get from them around what happened to our son's organs. Se were given a note with a phone number on to contact. This we did without much success to find out more. A month before the Covid lockdowns we received a phone call from a dear person in that department who was shocked at what she saw on our file. She said she would make work of it and wanted us to know that she had shown our card to a heart recipient who had recently received a donation (not our son's). She said he had cried that this had been on the heart of the parents of a donor and was not offended at all. She said that it was inappropriate this had happened.

We, however, never did hear back from her because of the lockdowns and all that went with that. I've spent many hours researching the topic of brain death and have been convinced that there is something questionable under this whole topic. I've listen to many YouTube talks from Dr. Byrne about the topic and wonder sometime if our son could have been given the paralyzing agents he speaks of on the Wednesday night when they removed his life support and he seemed swollen. That swelling was no longer visible on the Thursday night before his death.

We have only received one card from a recipient. We have more recently considered pursuing what happened with all that and considered requesting documents around the treatments and test he was subjected to. We are not sure how to proceed with this and would appreciate information about how to proceed with this; or if there would be a need to know more.

I also recently listened to an interview with an attorney who has made cases against abortionist who are harvesting live abortions and shipping them to Edmonton University. This is also where the Hospital we spent time in is. We question if there has ever been an investigation into this topic locally.

Please know that we would be willing to cooperate in doing more research on this all if you should need a case to investigate.

Thank you again and God bless!

Sincerely  
Christina Vanderzyl