

Internet helps promote organ donation in China

The myriad services just a swipe of the finger away in China are no longer limited to food delivery, airport check-ins, or finding a bike on the street.

The latest novelty is an after-death service: organ donation.

Once beset by misconceptions and opaque proceedings, the Internet is unleashing explosive growth of people signing up for organ donation.

Huang Jiefu, director general of the China Organ Transplantation Development Foundation, told Xinhua on the sidelines of the annual “two sessions” that the number of online applicants in two days had been equal to those registering at Red Cross offices in two years.

In December, Huang’s foundation – backed by the National Health and Family Planning Commission – launched an organ donation function on Alipay, an online payment platform with 450 million users.

Alipay users can easily register themselves as potential organ donors, because to sign up as an Alipay user, one has to submit accurate personal data. It saves the foundation efforts to collect and verify potential donors’ information.

If one regrets, even at the deathbed, he can de-list himself from the pool by a few clicks, says Hong Junling, public relations manager of the foundation.

Hong said after three months of operations, the number of registered donors on Alipay has exceeded 100,000 and keeps rising.

“With Internet, I register in just one minute,” said an eager donor who chose to remain nameless. “Life is short, but by donating my organs, I can save the lives of others and part of me will live on in them, so why not?”

In China, about 300,000 patients need organ transplants each year.

Volunteers became the lone source of transplants after organ trading was outlawed in 2011 and the use of organs from judicial systems banned in 2015.

In a public opinion poll by the foundation, 83 percent of the respondents said they would like to donate their organs after death. Among the remaining 17 percent, more than half were reluctant to register because they did not know where to apply or complained that the registration was too complicated.

Xiaolong (pseudonym) was diagnosed with progressive muscular dystrophy when he was six years old. Last year, at 14, he decided to call off his treatment.

Xiaolong said he had wanted to donate his body, but did not know where to go. He only succeeded in getting touch with a Red Cross cornea bank after

appealing on a local TV channel.

China has 731 million Internet users, more than half of the entire population. Internet is rapidly changing people's life, including the way they participate in charity.

"The wide availability and convenience of the Internet made it much easier for the Chinese to express their wish to donate organs," said Huang, a member of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a political advisory body.

Though registered donors do not translate into actual donors because the law gives the deceased's family the final say, there will definitely be more donations in the long run, Huang said.

As political advisors, CPPCC members can put forward proposals, comments and suggestions on major political and social issues.

Huang has proposed that the health insurance covers organ transplant costs so that more low-income families can afford it.