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National

Illegal trade in human kidneys flourishing

By Xu Chi | 2012-3-27 | NEWSPAPER EDITION

TO buy an iPhone 4S. To pay for an abortion for a girlfriend. To redeem a truck.

Just some of the reasons why many Chinese people are lining up to sell their kidneys to underground organ traffickers.

With more than a million patients in urgent need of kidney transplants each year and many healthy and willing donors desperate for cash, the illegal trade is booming, Nanfang Daily reported. Only 4,000 legal kidney transplants took place last year.

Some traffickers wander around hospitals every day, seeking patients who could become their next buyers. And there is a well developed network seeking out volunteers to become "kidney donors," the newspaper found.

After an operation at an underground hospital, He Qing, a 32-year-old Anhui Province native, received 20,000 yuan (US\$3,167) in cash - as well as a 12-centimeter scar "twisting on my stomach like a crawling centipede," he said. He could finally pay off his debts, go to the barber, and buy himself a cell phone. But lacking one of his kidneys, his health has been deteriorating. "I'm starting to regret selling the kidney," he told the newspaper. "I'm getting thinner and paler each day. If I'd worked hard in the past few months, I could have earned the money with my hands, not my kidney." He said he used to have a good job and a happy family life. But when his wife left him with their daughter, he quit his job and turned to drink. Eventually he owned more than 15,000 yuan on two credit cards.

Rather than borrow money from friends, he thought it better to sell his kidney.

"It's my own problem and I decided to solve it myself," he told the newspaper.

The newspaper revealed many other stories about why people turn to the kidney traffickers.

Dong Nan, 25, a man from Shaanxi Province, needed to redeem a truck that had been impounded by police after he had broken traffic laws. But he didn't lose a kidney. Traffickers instead hired him as an agent, paying him 500 yuan for every "donor" he could find.

Xiao Ding, 22, Henan Province native, traveled to Guangdong Province with no money in his pocket but a kidney to sell as he needed 3,000 yuan to pay for his pregnant girlfriend's abortion.

And 24-year-old A Guan, from Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, who was raised by his grandfather, said he decided to sell a kidney to buy an insurance policy which would give the old man extra income.

He planned to use the rest of the money to rent an apartment and buy a computer. But he told the newspaper he failed the health check.

A Hao, a 19-year-old Guangdong Province native, said he was eager to sell a kidney to buy an iPhone 4S and he was also planning to get an iPad 2.

The story appears on

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A former agent told the newspaper: "Those who want to sell their kidneys will always find an acceptable reason. But at least they are not bad people." Ma Tao said an agent's job was to look for "donors" and take them to hideouts where they would wait before having surgery.

They were usually paid 20,000 yuan, Ma said, just a 10th of the price traffickers could get from transplant patients.

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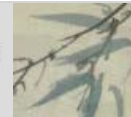
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