

Rajkumar inspires many to bequeath the gift of sight

More than 80 persons have come forward in the past week

Divya Ramamurthi

BANGALORE: Several people have come forward to emulate veteran actor late Rajkumar who pledged to donate his eyes.

In the week since the thespian's death, more than 80 persons have pledged to donate their eyes with the Dr. Rajkumar Eye Bank at Narayana Nethralaya, and over 400 persons have taken the form to register their names for eye donation.

A role model

Arun Samprathi, consultant ophthalmologist at Narayana Nethralaya, says: "Rajkumar has always been a role model and he continues to be so. His selfless act has got many people to come forward and pledge to donate their eyes." So far, 450 eye transplantations have been completed and 4,000 people have pledged to donate their eyes to the eye bank.

Many requests for the form for registration with the eye bank have come from the Rajkumar Fans' Association. Dr. Samprathi says the association has asked for over 300 forms.

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Technicians at the Lions Eye Bank say there has been an increase in the number of registrations in the past week. Anita, a lab technician, says 60 persons have registered their names with the bank in the past few days.

"Two million people in India suffer from corneal blindness, and any person who chooses to donate his/her eyes is welcome to do so," Dr. Samprathi says. He adds that the demand for corneas has always been more than the supply. "In some cases, the waiting list for cornea is seven months."

Dr. Samprathi says a person who wants to donate his/her eyes needs to fill a form and inform relatives of the decision. The eye bank has to be informed

of the donor's death immediately and corneas have to be removed within six hours. The eyes of the deceased should be closed and damp cotton kept on them so that they retain moisture.

Dr. Samprathi says that anyone, even the elderly, can donate cornea. Donor tissue that cannot be used for transplant can be used, with consent, for medical research, he says. "We do not waste cornea."

Eye hospital numbers

Persons interested in making a pledge to donate their eyes can contact Lions Eye Hospital (phone: 22237628/22243974) or Narayana Nethralaya (23373311/23577355).