

Human Tissue Act 2004

Information on whole body donation for
anatomical examination

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Thank you

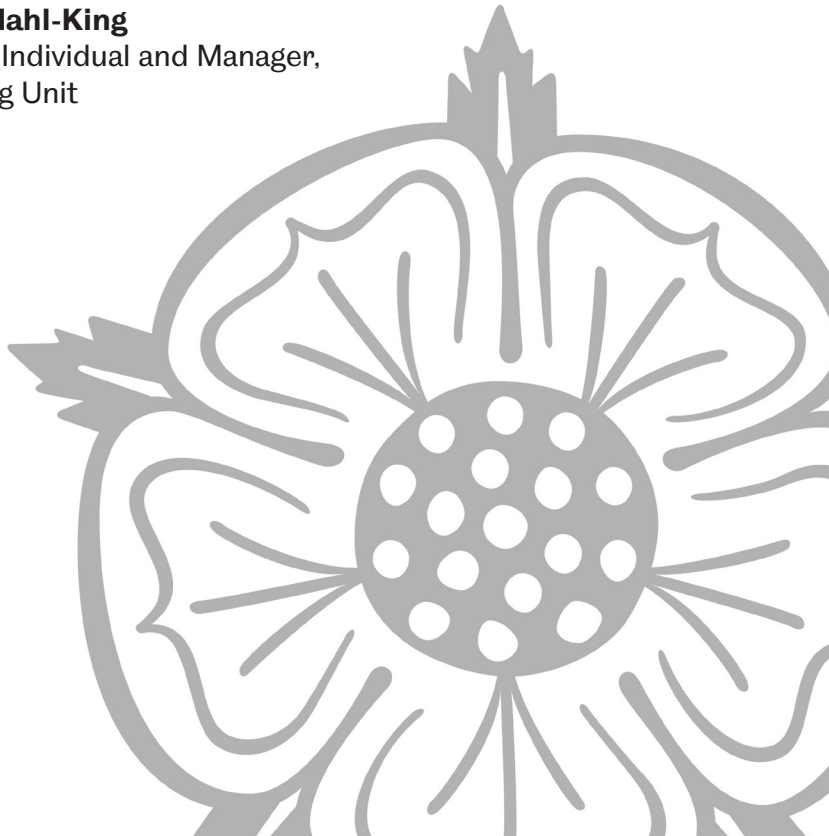
Thank you for expressing your wish to bequeath your body for anatomical examination after death. Your generous action is greatly appreciated and will benefit medical education for years to come.

Detailed instructions are enclosed. It is important that you understand the information contained in this booklet before signing the consent form. I strongly suggest that you discuss your wish to donate your body with your family, next of kin and/or executors. If you or your family need any further information or clarification on the process of body donation, please contact us at the address, or on any of the telephone numbers, given at the front of this booklet.

Thank you again for your interest and we hope that it will be many years before your wishes have to be considered.

Should you require this information in large type, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Isabelle Heyerdahl-King
HTA Designated Individual and Manager,
Medical Teaching Unit



Contents

The Medical Teaching Unit	4
About the Unit	4
Opening Hours	4
Anatomical Examination	4
What would prevent us from accepting a donation?	4
Accepting 'out of area'	5
Consenting to Donate	6
Age limit for consent	6
Completing the consent form	6
Directed consent	7
Including consent in a will or letter	7
Organ donation	8
Costs involved	8
Withdrawing your consent	9
Procedure when a donor dies	9
Instructions for next of kin/executor when a donor dies	9
If the donation is accepted	10
If the donation is not accepted	10
Eventual funeral	10
University Service of Thanksgiving	11

The Medical Teaching Unit

About the Unit

The Medical Teaching Unit is the anatomy teaching facility for the University of Sheffield School of Medicine, Dentistry and Health and Faculty of Science. Undergraduate and postgraduate students in Medicine, Dentistry, Biomedical Sciences, Bioengineering and a variety of other courses use our laboratory to study human anatomy. Without the invaluable gift of body donation such study would not be possible.

Opening hours

The Medical Teaching Unit is available 8.30 am - 4.30 pm Monday to Friday (excluding holiday periods). Answering machines are on all the appropriate contact numbers and outside these hours callers should leave their name and telephone number as a recorded message so it can be dealt with immediately the office re-opens.

There are two periods of annual University closure, at Easter and Christmas, when the Unit is unfortunately unable to accept donors.

Anatomical Examination

At the University of Sheffield we use human bodies for teaching purposes – for future doctors and other health professionals. We do not undertake research into specific disorders nor are we able to provide relatives with specific information about donors' medical conditions.

Should you wish to leave your body/tissue for research there are a number of appropriate organisations and we suggest you discuss this with your consultant or GP.

What would prevent us from accepting a donation?

Unfortunately no guarantee can be given that a bequest will be accepted. Among other considerations, the cause of death itself or a post-mortem examination could have made the body unsuitable for anatomical examination. Whilst not absolute, the following medical conditions may prevent us from accepting a bequest:

- the necessity for a post-mortem examination
- the removal of major organs for transplant (excluding corneas)
- amputated limbs
- extensive surgery
- gross obesity
- a history of malignancy
- a history of tuberculosis
- hepatitis (at the time of death)
- HIV positive/AIDS
- gangrene
- sepsis
- severe arthritic deformity of the joints or spine (particularly if this makes it impossible for the donor to lie flat)
- odema (water retention) in the limbs or abdomen
- MRSA/other notifiable infection

As part of the acceptance procedure your GP/last doctor in attendance, or medical health professionals involved in your care, will be contacted to ascertain cause of death and other relevant medical history.

In some instances the University's body storage facility may be full and in this situation, with the original consent of the donor, and with the agreement of the next of kin, the offer could be made to another local Medical School.

Accepting 'out of area'

The University of Sheffield considers the donation of bodies within its designated catchment area. Occasionally people who have a past connection to the area or the University may specifically request to register their donation with us, rather than their 'local' Medical School. We will accept such requests, but these donors should be aware that their estate will be charged for bringing their body to Sheffield.

Consenting to donate

The Human Tissue Act 2004 requires that you give written and witnessed consent to the donation during your lifetime. Valid written consent is a legal requirement and bequests cannot under any circumstances be accepted without this. Valid consent is considered as:

- Completion of Human Tissue Act consent form
- An appropriately worded Will (see section 'Including consent in a will or letter')
- An appropriately worded signed and witnessed letter (see section 'Including consent in a will or letter')

Consent cannot be given by a third party either before or after death has occurred and cannot be signed on behalf of the donor by their legal power of attorney. Consent is only valid when given by a person with full mental capacity to do so.

If you wish to bequeath your body for anatomical examination you should sign the enclosed consent form, in the presence of a witness. Return one copy of the completed form in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope and retain the duplicate copy with your Will or personal papers. It is important to inform your next of kin or executor of your wishes and we suggest you inform your doctor of your intention.

Age limit for consent

We will accept consent from donors aged 18 and over. There is no upper age limit for whole body donation.

Completing the consent form

Under the terms of the Human Tissue Act 2004 there is no limit on the length of time a donated body may be retained. However, if you wish to restrict the time that your body is retained, you have an opportunity to do so on the consent form.

Please ensure the consent form is signed and dated in the presence of a witness otherwise it will not provide valid consent. Your witness can be any person of your choosing, but should be someone who knows you.

It may be useful for the Medical Teaching Unit to prepare images for continued study and medical education. You are assured that if consent is given to prepare images these will be anonymous. The taking and displaying of images (including photographs, films and electronic images) is outside the scope of the Human Tissue Act 2004; however, the HTA endorses the good practice principles set out in guidance issued by relevant professional and regulatory bodies. For further information, please refer to the HTA's Codes of Practice, available at www.hta.gov.uk

When your completed consent form is received by the Medical Teaching Unit, an acknowledgment of receipt will be sent to you.

By completing and returning the Human Tissue Act 2004 consent form, you and the witness agree for your details to be securely held by the University of Sheffield in electronic form and/or hard copy. The information provided by you and the witness on the consent form will be used only for purposes relating to whole body donation, and you or your witness will only be contacted in connection with your bequest.

Please keep us informed of any change of address or contact details, in case we need to get in touch.

Directed consent

We accept that written consent from a donor may not always be possible, such as when a mentally competent person is physically unable to write. In these circumstances, you should contact the Bequeathal Office for further guidance.

Including consent in a will or letter

You may also wish to include your consent to donate in your will or other document. We would advise that the wording be taken from the enclosed consent form. An example would be:

“I wish to donate my body for the purpose of anatomical examination to the University (or other Medical School). I do/do not consent to the taking of images of my body. I do/do not consent to the retention of parts of my body after anatomical examination is complete”

Using this form of words will ensure that the document correctly reflects your desire to donate your body for medical education.

We would also recommend that the enclosed consent form is still completed, even if you have stated your wish to donate in your will or letter.

Organ donation

We would be unable to accept a donation if major organs had been removed for transplant. The removal of organs at the time of death interferes with the embalming process and makes bodies unsuitable for anatomical examination. An exception to this rule is that you can donate the corneas of your eyes without affecting the body donation process.

If organ donation is your preference, you could still register for whole body donation by completing the enclosed consent form. Then, at the time of death, if for any reason your organs were unsuitable for transplant, the consent would be in place for whole body donation as an alternative.

Costs involved

No payment is made to either donors or their relatives.

The University will cover the majority of funeral costs but a contribution will be required from the family if they choose to attend the ceremony.

Any expenses incurred prior to the donation being accepted (e.g. removal to a Chapel of Rest pending the offer of a donation) must be borne by the next of kin or the donor's estate.

It should also be noted that if a body has to be collected outside a 20 mile radius of the University, next of kin will be asked to contribute to the cost of transportation.

Withdrawing your consent

Consent to donate can be withdrawn at any time. Simply notify the Medical Teaching Unit and your details will be removed from our system.

Procedure when a donor dies

Instructions for next of kin/executor when a donor dies

The Medical Teaching Unit should be contacted as soon as possible after death occurs (contact details on the inside cover of this booklet). The Unit is open Monday to Friday, 8.30 am - 4.30 pm (excluding holiday periods) and answering machines are on all the appropriate contact numbers. Callers should leave their name and telephone number as a recorded message so it can be dealt with promptly. The offer of the bequest will be considered immediately the office re-opens.

It is advisable that the body is removed to cold storage (e.g. hospital mortuary/Chapel of Rest) as soon as possible after death. If no refrigeration is available this may make it impossible for the donation to be accepted.

If the deceased has to be removed to a Chapel of Rest prior to acceptance, that cost will be borne by the family or the estate of the deceased. The Medical Teaching Unit will cover all reasonable costs from the time our funeral directors take charge of the deceased. Should next of kin wish to view the body this must take place before the donor is transported to the Medical Teaching Unit, after which time viewing will no longer be possible.

The Medical Teaching Unit will contact the donor's GP and/or last doctor in attendance, or medical health professionals involved in the care of the donor, and a decision on whether or not the donation is acceptable will be made.

You will be informed within as short a time as possible about the decision.

If the donation is accepted

If the bequest is accepted the Funeral Director appointed by the Medical Teaching Unit will be instructed to make all the arrangements for removal and transportation of the donor's body to the Medical Teaching Unit.

The death must be registered with the local Registrar. An appointment to register the death can be made as soon as a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been issued by the doctor. The Registrar will issue you with a Green Certificate (Certificate of Burial or Cremation) and a Death Certificate. These two forms, along with the signed and witnessed consent form/will/letter, should be left with the body of the donor. This may be at a hospital mortuary or at a Chapel of Rest.

When the donor's body is received by the Medical Teaching Unit, you will be sent forms regarding the final funeral arrangements. Please ensure these forms are completed in full and returned as soon as possible. The Medical Teaching Unit at the University of Sheffield will be responsible for the examination and preservation of the body until such time as a funeral is held.

If the donation is not accepted

If the donation cannot be accepted for anatomical examination the next of kin or executors will be informed as soon as possible and responsibility for burial or cremation will then rest with the executors or next of kin. The Medical Teaching Unit cannot make any financial contribution towards these private funeral arrangements.

Eventual funeral

Families are given a range of options with regard to the eventual funeral. These include no further contact, attendance or non-attendance at the cremation and collection of ashes or we can arrange for scattering of ashes at the crematorium.

The University will cover the majority of funeral costs but a contribution will be required from the family if they choose to attend the ceremony.

If you and your family wish to make private funeral arrangements these will be at the family's expense.

Under exceptional circumstances when no instruction is left by the donor regarding the funeral arrangements or such instructions cannot be obtained from the next of kin, the Medical Teaching Unit will arrange for cremation and scattering of ashes at one of the local crematoria.

University Service of Thanksgiving

You and your family may like to know that if we are able to accept your body after death, they will be invited, along with the families of other donors, to attend an Interdenominational Service of Thanksgiving which is held annually, usually in November, at the University. The Service is also attended by staff and students whose work and education benefits from the generosity of our donors.

