



Last Updated 22/11/2016

Many people, particularly those with relatively uncommon conditions such as Motor Neurone Disease, often consider leaving their bodies or parts of their bodies to medical research or science. University anatomy departments have a need for donated bodies in order to teach medical and dental students basic anatomy, while some researchers are interested in receiving parts of bodies, or tissue samples to study the effects of a disease on the body.

Leaving specific organs, such as the brain, is often referred to as tissue banking since, over time, a “bank” of specific tissues is built up that can be compared with each other.

Although this bequest might appear to be relatively straightforward, it is now a more regulated area of activity. No longer is it possible for relatives to donate the body of a family member at the time of death. In keeping with the requirements of the Anatomy Act 1984 and the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006, the arrangements now need to be made in advance by the person themselves.

If you are considering leaving your body to an anatomy department you should discuss this idea in detail with your family in case any of them are shocked or have very strong objections to your plans, as their cooperation will be required after your death.

While all of the Scottish medical schools will accept bodies for teaching purposes, at the time of writing (June 2009) the only Scottish medical school accepting tissue

specifically for tissue banking for neurological research is at Edinburgh University. Unfortunately, for several reasons, the main one being the cost of transporting the body, only those who die within the NHS Lothian area are normally accepted. If you live within the area served by NHS Lothian and wish to donate your brain and spinal cord for research you should contact Dr Colin Smith at the Department of Neuropathology, University of Edinburgh Wilkie Building, Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9AG; telephone 0131 651 5007. If you live outside of this catchment area and have a strong desire to donate tissue for neurological research please contact Craig Stockton, Chief Executive of MND Scotland at the address or phone number below.

There are special arrangements for this kind of donation and the rest of this fact sheet does not apply to you as your body will be returned to your next of kin after removal of the brain and spinal cord.

To leave your body for mainstream research and teaching you should contact your closest medical school anatomy department at the address given at the end of this factsheet. They will provide an opportunity for you to meet the bequeathal secretary so you can talk through the process and have any questions answered. If you decide to continue the secretary will provide you with notes explaining what will happen after your death and two copies of a bequest form which you should complete, sign and have witnessed. Apart from

MND Scotland is the only charity funding research and providing care and information for those affected by MND in Scotland.

MND Factsheet 48 Medical Bequests

their logo and address all of the universities use a common consent form.

After completing your name and personal details and those of the witness to your signature there are three simple questions which require boxes to be ticked. The answers to these questions either grant or refuse permission for the university to do one of three things:

- Pass your body to another university if the first has sufficient bodies at the time of your death and the other is short of them,
- Retain your body, or parts of it, for longer than the three years allowed by the Anatomy Act 1984,
- Permit the use of images taken of your unidentifiable body or body parts.

You should return one copy of this form to the issuing department and retain the other copy for your own records. You should let your relatives and your medical team know where your copy of the bequest form is kept so that when the time comes they can take the appropriate actions and inform the appropriate anatomy department.

The university will usually accept the costs of transporting a body from within its own area only. If your body has to be transported from outside this area these costs will normally have to be paid from your estate or by a relative.

You should note there is no guarantee that the university will accept your body at the time of death as they may already have a sufficient number for their current needs. Additionally, on notification of your death the anatomy department which holds the bequeathal documents will contact a doctor who has been involved in your final illness to ascertain the cause of death and ensure that your body is still suitable for their purposes.

Major surgery, some infectious diseases, post mortem examination (ordered by the procurator fiscal if there are unusual circumstances) or organ donation might render your body unsuitable. If the anatomy department refuses your donation your relatives should make arrangements for a normal funeral.

If the university accepts your body the undertaker to the anatomy department will usually uplift your body within a day. As part of the acceptance your next of kin will be asked to do the following:

1. sign a consent form authorising the use of your body for anatomical examination,
2. supply the Form 14 the Registrar will provide to whoever actually registers your death and
3. sign an application for cremation form (if appropriate).

(See Factsheet 45 *After a Bereavement* for information about registering a death in Scotland.)

Normally the university will arrange for cremation or burial, according to your wishes, with no further reference to your relatives. This can sometimes be difficult for relatives.

Your relatives may also be given the opportunity to attend the next memorial service held at the university for all those who have donated bodies and to have your ashes returned after cremation.

Since 2006 it has been possible for medical schools in Scotland to use donated bodies to train surgeons in new surgical and implantation techniques as well as the traditional teaching of anatomy to undergraduate medical and dental students. In part these new developments have been helped by the increasing numbers of bodies being received in recent years.

MND Factsheet 48 Medical Bequests

You should bear in mind that with no body your relatives will not be able to hold a funeral service. As this is often an essential part of the grieving process your relatives could consider holding a memorial service in its place.

Organ Donation

There are only two medical conditions where organ donation is ruled out completely. A person cannot become an organ or tissue donor if they have been diagnosed with HIV or have, or are suspected of having, CJD. There appear

to be no hard and fast rules relating to the donation of organs by people who have MND or any other conditions. The decision about whether some or all organs or tissue are suitable for transplant is made at the time of death by a healthcare professional, taking into account your medical history.

It would be prudent, given that the precise cause of MND is not yet known or understood, not to donate organs from someone with MND, however, practice appears to vary across the globe.

Scottish University Anatomy Department Contacts for Medical Bequests			
University	Bequeathal Secretary	Telephone	email
Aberdeen	Anatomy Department, School of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Aberdeen The Suttie Centre (3 rd Floor), Foresterhill Aberdeen, AB25 2ZD	01224 274320 01224 272000	jane.patterson@abdn.ac.uk
Dundee	Mrs V McGuire, School of Anatomy, University of Dundee, MSI/WTB Complex, Dundee, DD1 5EH	01382 388825	v.mcguire@dundee.ac.uk
Edinburgh	Susan Bond, SBMS (Anatomy) Doorway 3, University Medical School, Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9AG	0131 651 5996	body-donations@ed.ac.uk
Glasgow	Mrs A Mellish, University of Glasgow Anatomy Department, University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8QQ	0141 330 5397	annmarie.mellish@glasgow.ac.uk
St Andrews	School of Medicine, Medical & Biological Sciences Building, North Haugh, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9TF	01334 463596	christal.grierson@st-andrews.ac.uk

Further Information

Factsheet 14 Making a Will and Leaving Legacies
 Factsheet 44 Advance Directives
 Factsheet 45 After a Bereavement