

# A Lasting Gift to Medical Science

## *Be Informed*

Information and Procedures for Persons  
Interested In Donating their Bodies for the  
Advancement of Medical Education and  
Research





## INTRODUCTION

### **A Lasting Gift to Medical Science and Teaching**

The Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology within the Faculty of Medicine of Dalhousie University maintains a human body donation program. The main use of the donated human remains is in the teaching of normal human anatomy to Medical, Dental, Health Professional and Life Sciences students. In addition, the donated human remains may also be used for research purposes, including but not limited to research on the anatomy and function of bones, muscles, the nervous system and other tissues. (Please see section on Teaching and Research Procedures). The Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology provides the necessary instruction to enable students to gain the requisite knowledge of human anatomy. The use of donated human remains is an essential part of the curriculum.

**It is important to note that the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology is a teaching institution and is not at all involved in determining the cause of death or in investigating any issues related to the pathology associated with any of the individuals whose bodies are donated to the Department.**

## TEACHING AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

### Medical Photographs

Photographs may be taken by members of the university to document the total body and specific external and internal features of the deceased, but only with written pre-approval and authorization of the department head in keeping with established policy. These photographs will be used only for medical education and/or medical research purposes. If photographs are used for medical teaching and research purposes, the deceased's name will not be revealed.

### Genetic Information

Samples of a specimen of blood or appropriate tissues may be taken for genetic testing, such as examination of chromosomes or DNA, or biochemical study.

### Removal, Retention and Disposition of Tissue and/or Organ Samples

Tissue and organ samples are normally removed from the body and examined. Tissue or organ samples must be treated by special fixative or preservative solutions and retained for a period of time. This retention is important in order to obtain as much educational value and research-related information as possible. Organs temporarily removed for anatomical examination are returned to the body. Tissue and organ samples may be retained, without limit of time, in a respectful manner in the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology of the University, for future medical education and research purposes until the respectful disposition of the tissue by the University.

## HOW TO ARRANGE THE DONATION OF YOUR BODY

Many people who intend to donate their bodies to Medical Science quite naturally think of including a statement in their will to that effect. You may of course do this, but in addition it is necessary to complete all enclosed forms. These forms must be returned to the Department at the following address: Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, Faculty of Medicine, Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building, 5850 College St., Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS B3H 1X5. A copy of your completed forms will be sent to you. The enclosed wallet card should be completed and kept in your wallet.

The Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at Dalhousie University is authorized to accept the donation of human remains from the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward

Island under the legislation contained in the Anatomy Acts of those Provinces. Please Note: None of the documents which you complete and sign in connection with this donation program is considered to be legally binding prior to death. Hence, no legal consultation is necessary and at any time prior to death, should you change your mind concerning your intention to donate, your forms will be removed from the Department files upon request. The Department always considers the wishes of the living and is unlikely to accept the donation of a body where disagreement concerning the course of action exists among close relatives of the donor. For this reason, you are strongly advised to discuss your intention to donate with all of your close relatives.

## STEPS TO BE COMPLETED AT THE TIME OF THE DONOR'S DEATH

- 1. If Death Occurs in a Healthcare Institution:** The attending physician or healthcare provider should contact the Inspector of Anatomy as quickly as possible.
- 2. If Death Occurs at Home:** Contact should be made to the family/attending physician as soon as possible. The physician **MUST** contact the Inspector of Anatomy as soon as possible, at which time further instructions will be given.

**INSPECTOR OF ANATOMY** - For New Brunswick  
Department of Health - Telephone: 506-643-6848 (24 hrs)  
PO Box 5100  
520 King St.  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5G8

**Dalhousie University:** If you are unable to reach the Inspector of Anatomy you may call:

**Dalhousie Security – Tel. 902-494-6400 (24 hrs)**

### For the University

Ms. Heather Ann Walker  
Office Telephone: 902-494-7724  
Tel. VG Locating 902-473-2222 Tel.

OR

Mr. Robert Sandeski  
Office Telephone: 902-494-3383  
VG Locating 902-473-2222

When the Inspector of Anatomy is contacted, it will be determined if the body can be accepted by the University.

## ACCEPTANCE OF A DONATION BY THE INSPECTOR OF ANATOMY (IOA)

If the donation is accepted, transportation of the body from the place of death to the Department of Anatomy & Neurobiology will be arranged by the Inspector of Anatomy. The University will bear the expense of this transportation. Unfortunately, viewing of the remains at the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology cannot be permitted.

The following information is mailed to the designated next-of-kin to be completed and returned to the office of the IOA.

1. Letter acknowledging the donation
2. Permission to cremate form
3. Permission to publish name in memorial and/or interment booklet

## DONATION REFUSAL

The University recognizes the generous intentions of those who bequeath their bodies to medical science. For a number of reasons, it is not always possible to accept a donation. The circumstances which would cause a donation to be refused are complex. (Please see page 7 of this package). Any final decision about the acceptance of a body cannot be made until the time of death. **It is strongly recommended that potential donors make alternative arrangements for cremation or burial should the body NOT BE accepted by the University.**

If the donation cannot be accepted, the University will **NOT** be responsible in any way for the arrangements or expenses connected with interment requirements.

## FINAL DISPOSITION OF DONATED REMAINS

It should be noted that there must be a lapse of time, typically between one and three years, between death and the final disposition of the remains. In some instances certain tissue may be preserved for longer periods, using various methods, for continued study. (Please see section "Teaching and Research Procedures").

**Cremation** – It is the policy of the Department to encourage cremation of the remains. There are three options for the final disposition of the cremated ashes. These are also listed on the enclosed “Permission to Cremate” form.

**Option # 1**

- CREMATION WITH INTERMENT OF ASHES IN THE DALHOUSIE MEMORIAL GARDENS

**Option # 2**

- CREMATION WITH THE ASHES BEING SHIPPED (VIA REGISTERED MAIL) TO: NAME and ADDRESS:

**Option # 3**

- CREMATION WITH THE ASHES TO BE PICKED UP BY: NAME and ADDRESS:

If option **1**) is chosen, the University will bear all expenses. If options **2**) or **3**) are chosen, the University will arrange and meet the cost of cremation and shipment of ashes (usually by registered mail). **THE FAMILY OR ESTATE WILL BE REQUIRED TO BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ARRANGEMENTS AND COSTS CONNECTED WITH THE INTERMENT OF THE ASHES.**

**Burial** – Should the donor or family have a strong preference for burial rather than cremation, the person acting on behalf of the deceased must make these wishes known to the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology in writing as soon as possible following death so that arrangements can be made for this. **If this preference is not made known, cremation will be carried out after studies are completed.**

In the case of a family burial in a private cemetery, all expenses and arrangements **will be** the responsibility of the donor’s estate. **Transportation of the remains from the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology to the burial destination must be performed by a funeral service. In the case of burial of the body rather than cremation, all expenses incurred will be the responsibility of the donor’s estate.** The University will bear the costs of burial at the Dalhousie Memorial Gardens.

## UNIVERSITY MEMORIAL AND INTERMENT SERVICES

The University Memorial and Interment services are held annually for the families and friends of donors whose remains are interred that year.

The Memorial service is held for all donors. The department will notify the named next-of-kin / legal executor in writing when the remains are to be released from the university. This will be done well in advance of the services.

The Interment Service is held for donors who have chosen interment at the Dalhousie Memorial Gardens. This service takes place at the Dalhousie Memorial Gardens located in the non-denominational Pleasant Hill Estates in Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia.

Officials of the university, faculty, staff and students attend both services which are arranged and paid for by the University. Due to the perpetual care requirements at Pleasant Hill Estates and certain provisions contained in the Human Tissue Gift Act of Nova Scotia, the University cannot make provisions for special arrangements such as the placing of individual markers for remains interred in Dalhousie Memorial Gardens; however, flowers may be placed at the grave site. The site is marked by a large bronze memorial plaque containing the following inscription:

*"Here lie the mortal remains of those who donated their bodies to the furtherance of medical sciences at Dalhousie University. Beyond the sphere of earthly life, they have given themselves for the good of others."*

## DONATIONS OF TISSUES AND ORGANS

The Department does not become involved in the donation of organs for transplant purposes. Persons interested in making such donations are advised to contact:

NB Organ and Tissue Procurement Program  
PO Box 5100  
520 King St.  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5G8  
Telephone: 506-643-6848 (24 hrs)



## POSSIBLE REASONS FOR REFUSAL OF A DONATION

This list of criteria may not be all inclusive and is subject to the discretion of the Inspector of Anatomy and the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at the time of death.

1. If death occurs when the storage facilities in the department are full or when the University is closed for the Christmas and New Year holidays.
2. If death takes place outside the Maritime Provinces.
3. If the body has been embalmed.
4. If an autopsy has been performed or is required.
5. If deterioration has occurred in the body after death due to serious delay in notification or other causes.
6. If major organs have been removed following death or are to be removed for transplant or other purposes. The sole exception is the eyes which may be donated.
7. If major surgery has occurred within one month prior to death.
8. If death is the result of a major traumatic accident including major burns.
9. If, at the time of death, the potential donor is clinically obese.
10. If death is caused by an infectious disease (e.g. HIV, Hep B, Hep C, septicaemia, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease).
11. If a ruptured aortic aneurysm has occurred.
12. If there is serious disagreement among the immediate family about donation.

**NOTE: There is no maximum age restriction for the acceptance of donations to medical science; however, the Department will not accept donations of bodies of persons under the age of 16.**

Donations in memory of a donor to the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology are gratefully accepted. Donations received will be used for the assistance of the work of students and researchers in the Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University.

## REMINDER TO DONORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Please inform the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at Dalhousie University (telephone 902-494-6850, or in writing) of any revisions to your completed "Donation" and "Permission to Cremate" forms (i.e., address change, name change, change in next-of-kin / legal executor or change of venue for the final disposition of your remains).

***Please note: Should there be a change in the next-of-kin / legal executor, a new "Permission to Cremate" form must be completed and forwarded to the Department.***