

Service After Death

BODY BEQUEATHAL PROGRAM

Information on leaving ones' body for anatomical studies



Faculty of Medicine

Human Anatomy and Cell Science



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA



The Body Donation Program

The Body Donation Program was initiated in 1936 by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba. In 1952, Dr. I.M. Thompson established the Service After Death program, making the University of Manitoba Medical School the first in Canada, to publicly commemorate the burial of persons who donated their bodies.

An increasing number of people make arrangements to leave their bodies for anatomical study, thereby performing an unusual and outstanding service. Such people have the unique distinction of rendering Service After Death to their fellow men and women.

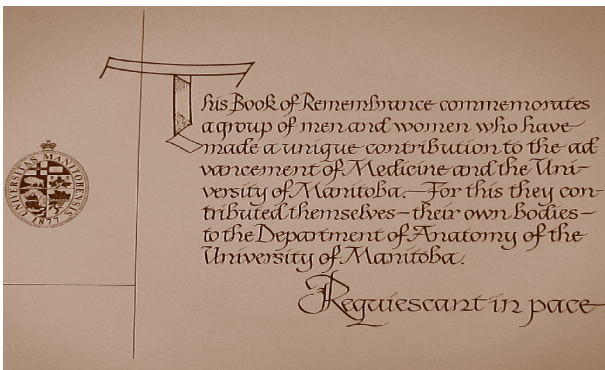
Because of the increased demand for more doctors, dentists, and other members of the health professions, the need for anatomical material to teach medical, dental, medical rehabilitation, and graduate students is increasing. To obtain firsthand experience of the structure and functions of humans, students must study the bodies of the deceased.

Students preparing themselves for medical, dental, and allied health professions are fully aware of the special privilege granted to them by law and the obligation they have to conduct themselves in a professional manner during study of their deceased fellow men and women. All anatomical material is accorded the dignity and respect that society customarily grants to the deceased.

Often students and staff make contributions to the Anatomical Research Fund or place wreaths at the grave site as a tribute to the persons who donated their bodies. Faculty, staff, students and health professionals attend the funerals to pay last respects to those who made a special contribution to their professional education.

We protect the privacy and dignity of all bodies that are donated. Faculty and students are only given the age, gender and cause of death of a body if it's deemed necessary for their studies.

The names of accepted donors for anatomical study are recorded in a Book of Remembrance, which is on display in the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science. The care and thought taken in the preparation of this book are evident from its frontispiece.



Frontispiece of Book of Remembrance

Donating your body

Registration

You may leave your body for anatomical study by completing two original copies of the “Statement of Desire / Waiver of Claim Registration” form. Return one of the originals to the department and give the other to your preferred claimant (spouse, common-law partner, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, executor, lawyer or any other person legally entitled to claim the body after death).

Note that the “Statement of Desire” is not legally binding because legislation has not been enacted in this province giving persons the legal right to donate their bodies. In common law your body is not part of your estate; therefore, you have no legal right to bequeath it. The legal power to determine the disposal of your body rests with your next-of-kin, the executor named in your Will, or the person lawfully in charge of your body at the time of death.

Please note that the department will not make a decision on acceptance of the body donation until the actual time of death. Therefore, please make sure you have alternate arrangements in place in the event that your body is not accepted into the Service After Death Program.

Seek consent

Talk to your family about your wish, preferably while you are in good health. Seek their understanding and cooperation. If your next-of-kin, or any member of your immediate family strongly disapproves of the idea, you are advised not to pursue it further. If your next-of-kin will not complete “Waiver of Claim”, you are strongly urged to abandon the idea.

At the time of death

The next-of-kin should inform the doctor and the hospital/personal care home authorities at once about the assignment of the body and should give clear instructions that the body is to be neither autopsied nor embalmed.

The Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science should be contacted at (204) 789-3652 in order to determine acceptability. Note that normal office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday, however, a voice message should be left indicating your name and phone number, and the deceased's name and location.

If the deceased cannot be kept under proper cold refrigeration beyond 12 hours following death or requires immediate removal, please call Winnipeg Funeral Transfer Service at 956-2882 or toll free 1-877-956-2882 to arrange for transportation to their cold refrigeration facility.

Please note that the transfer service does not make the decision on acceptance of a donor. Although the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science would normally accept each body, the University reserves the right to refuse any body. In the event that the body cannot be accepted, the next-of-kin or executor is responsible for making alternate arrangements.

Accepted body donations

Accepted bodies can remain in the program for up to four years after death. The duration that the bodies are kept (until the interment ceremony) varies depending on the teaching needs of the department.

When studies are complete

Each year the University arranges an interment service which is held at Brookside Cemetery. Committal services are delivered by a clergy of the denomination to which the deceased belonged. The funeral expenses are paid by the University. The Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science preserves the memory of the donor by inscribing their name in the Book of Remembrance, on display in the department. A memorial monument is also located at Brookside Cemetery to recognize the significant gift that all donors make when their bodies are entrusted to our faculty. However, the next-of-kin may choose to claim the ashes for private burial/disposition at their own expense.

Frequently asked questions

Is there an age restriction?

Anyone over the age of 18 years is eligible to donate their body.

Can next-of-kin or an executor authorize for donation for a deceased person who has not previously registered to the Service After Death Program?

Yes, any person who has legal custody of your body and is over the age of 18 years may make the donation. However, it is preferred to have the donors signed consent on file indicating their willingness to participate in our program.

Can I change my mind regarding donation of my body?

Yes, you may change your mind to donate your body at any time. Please let your next-of-kin know of your final decision. We also ask that you inform the Service After Death Program in writing to remove your assignment forms from the body donation program.

Will I automatically be accepted into the Service After Death Program when I die?

The University of Manitoba greatly appreciates everyone who is willing to donate their body. However, the decision of acceptance into the program is not determined until the actual time of death. Therefore, you should also make your next-of-kin aware of alternate arrangements should you not be accepted into the body donation program.

What circumstances might cause my body to not be accepted into the program at the time of death, even if I have signed up for the body donation program?

We undertake an extensive embalming process, which far exceeds that performed by funeral homes. We do this to insure that we can continue to use the body for teaching over an extended period of time of up to four years. As a result, the condition of the body at the time of death, your medical history leading up to the death and previous case histories are all important considerations in deciding whether a donation is to be accepted.

Examples of specific conditions which would make a donation unacceptable are:

- Autopsy or Medical Examiners Cases
- Death has occurred outside the 322 km radius of Winnipeg
- Infectious or contagious diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS, HEPATITIS (any type), SEPSIS)
- Severe antibiotic resistant infections (e.g. MRSA, VRE, ESBL)
- Extensive trauma to the body (including recent major surgery)
- Excessively overweight bodies (as determined by the Department)
- Extensive abdominal or pelvic surgery
- Bodies of infants and children are unacceptable

What expenses if any are involved upon the death of a donor?

The expenses incurred in transporting the body to the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science, up to a maximum of \$75.00, will be borne by the University, as will the expenses for cremation and interment of the cremated remains in the University plot at Brookside Cemetery. Cost for transportation beyond the \$75.00 limit will be the responsibility of the family, next-of-kin, or executor of the deceased.

What is the difference between whole body donation and organ / or tissue donation?

Whole body donation is when you give your body to medical education for teaching purposes. Organ and tissue donation is when you give your organs and/or tissues to be surgically transplanted into someone that needs them.

For further information please contact the Service After Death Program

MAIL:

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745 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3E 0J9

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Full program information and registration forms are available online at
umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/anatomy/serviceafterdeath.html

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