

Common Facts and Misconceptions About Donating Your Body to a Medical School

1. Donating your body is not a legal or binding contract either on the part of a medical school or the individual donating their body. A donor may cancel their bequest in writing at anytime. A person willing their body to science is under the jurisdiction of the State Anatomical Board of the State of Texas.
2. A medical school reserves the right to reject a body which does not meet its criteria for teaching and research. If an autopsy is necessary or other extenuating circumstances occur, such as traumatic injury, contagious diseases, suicide or if organs or parts have been removed for transplantation or otherwise, we cannot accept the body to our program.
3. Alternative plans should be made for the disposition of the body in the event that a body is rejected.
4. The medical school's primary purpose for accepting donated bodies is for teaching. Research is conducted based upon the needs of the faculty and staff at our institution.
5. To assure that maximum benefit is derived from this contribution, a medical school may transfer, at its discretion, a body to other teaching or research institutions within the State of Texas, if the needs of such institutions are deemed appropriate. With the permission of the donor at the time of donation, the Anatomical Board may also transport a willed/ donated body out of the State of Texas in the event that the holding institution and the executive secretary of that board have determined that an excess of bodies currently exists in the State of Texas.
6. We do not accept organs for transplantation. Life Gift and The Living Bank coordinate the organ donation in the Houston area. The medical school does not accept bodies from which organs for transplantation have been removed.
7. At the time of death, the legal next of kin must sign a release form. In the State of Texas, the legal next of kin is responsible for the disposition of the body. The order of relationship for the legal next of kin is: spouse, child (ren) of legal age, parent, brother or sister of legal age, grandchildren of legal age. If there are no living relatives, an executor or someone handling a person's estate may sign the release form.
8. The final disposition of the body after donation rests with the medical school. Special arrangements can be made to return cremains to the family; however, a special handling fee applies.
9. Medical schools recognize the need for some families to have a memorial service (a funeral service in which the body is not present). Arrangements for a service are made by the family at their discretion. Many families choose to make arrangements with a clergy member or to contact a local funeral home.

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