

BEQUEATHING THE BODY

In North Carolina, the law is very flexible about donation (bequeathal) of one's body for the purpose of medical study and research. In theory this can be done by a statement on the Driver's License. In actual practice it is very much preferable to file a Bequeathal or Donation Certificate with a medical school. It is also possible to make the bequest an item in a will drawn by an attorney, although most donors do not. A will does permit as much detail as the donor wishes.

Completing the necessary paperwork -

Individuals wishing to make a gift of their body to the University of North Carolina School of Medicine must complete the following forms:

1. Certificate for Bequeathing Body by Individual or Next-of-Kin
2. Supplementary Information About Donor
3. Authorization for Release of Medical Information

The Certificate for Bequeathing Body is the only form that must be witnessed by two adults. Please send the original of all three forms to the address listed on the next page. We suggest that you keep a copy for you files. You may also wish to provide copies to your executor and/or your attorney.

Certain practical considerations -

1. Experience has shown that it is important that the bequest be known to at least one member of the family, to the family physician, and to the family minister. Days or weeks may elapse before a will is read, a circumstance that could defeat the splendid purpose of the bequest. It is also important to ascertain whether any member of the family objects to the bequest of the body. Some persons have a deeply rooted objection to use of the body for anatomical study even though they recognize the importance of such study. Such a person might feel deeply and permanently hurt if the body of a relative were donated to a medical school. The fact that the objection has no legal standing will not ease the hurt. In short, it is best to establish in advance that there is no objection.
2. Bequeathal of the body does not preclude a funeral service. The body may be removed to a medical school directly after death. If this is done, a memorial service can be held. It is also possible to have a more traditional funeral service. In this event, the funeral director contacts the School of Medicine prior to preparation of the body. Following the service, the body is transferred to a medical school, rather than to a cemetery.

3. The costs of transportation of the body to the medical school must be paid by the estate or the next-of-kin. The fee for transportation is subject to increase.
4. It is not necessary for a person who bequeaths his or her body to make advance arrangement with a funeral director, particularly if the body is to go directly to a medical school. The attending physician, hospital (or other health care facility) or funeral home can notify the School of Medicine and explain the circumstances.
5. Upon completion of the study, the body is cremated. The cremated remains will be returned to the family or executor of the estate for burial. Because courses begin only at certain times of the year and last almost a year, it may be two years or more before ashes are returned.
6. We cannot accept donations where any of the following conditions are present at death: infectious diseases, hepatitis A, B, C, HIV/Aids, jaundice, Creutzfeld-Jacob disease, tuberculosis, MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), sepsis, decubitus ulcers (bed sores), emaciation (weight under 100 lbs), obesity (men weight over 200 pounds, women weight over 180 pounds). In addition, we will not accept a donation that has been autopsied, or where tissue or organ has been donated (with exception of the cornea). The Body Donation Program reserves the right to refuse any donation which will not serve its intended educational purposes. Alternative arrangements should be made by the family or executor of the estate in the event the body is declined.

Additional information about body donation can be obtained from -

University of North Carolina
School of Medicine
Body Donation Program
CB# 7520
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7520

Phone: 919-966-1134
Fax: 919-966-6354

Organ Donation Information -

We are often asked about organ donation.

The Body Donation Program is concerned with donating the entire body and is unrelated to any organ donation program. The cornea is the only body organ that can be removed prior to whole Body Donation.

The best source of information about organ donation is an organ procurement agency in your own area. If you find no listing in the telephone book, your physician or local hospital should be able to give you a name and number.