



## INFORMATION FOR DONORS

*For those who in death have helped the living.*

This booklet is dedicated to the donors of the  
Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine at  
Marshall University

The Human Gift Registry  
Room CEB 309  
Department of Anatomy and Pathology  
Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine  
Marshall University  
One John Marshall Drive  
Huntington, WV 25755

304-696-7382  
<http://jcesom.marshall.edu/HGR>

***The Human Gift Registry Programs of Marshall University, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, and West Virginia University are operated under the auspices of the West Virginia Anatomical Board which is statutorily authorized and created by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.***

To donate one's body to the health sciences is a noble, compassionate and humanitarian gesture. The benefits to mankind are very real. After death, the body can become a source of life to others by providing training for the physicians of tomorrow.

Formal medical training in human anatomy is the foundation for a doctor's skill and knowledge. Basic anatomical training comes early in the curriculum for all medical, dental, nursing, and physical therapy students. These students also study the structure of the human body as it relates to surgery, cardiology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, neurology, dermatology and many other specialty fields. The body is used not only to teach the necessary details of structure and function, but also to develop vital skills in clinical procedures and techniques. Serious and dedicated study of the human body is absolutely essential in order to develop the professional competence health professionals must have to provide quality health care.

In research, too, the body can be utilized to great advantage. One frequently reads about new medical discoveries. These discoveries result primarily from the intensive research activities

carried out in our nation's medical centers. Because of such research, the quality of life, and the average life expectancy in many countries, including the United States, has been lengthened significantly.

West Virginia residents and citizens of all other states may respond to the urgent need for support of the health sciences. Donation of one's body is authorized by the laws of West Virginia and all other states, and clear statutory provisions have been established for this priceless deed for humanity. Some basic questions and answers on the following pages will provide information you will want to understand in order to make this important decision.

**Who may donate?** Any person 18 years of age or older may be a donor. **However, the Human Gift Registry is under no obligation to accept any gift and may, in its discretion, decline a donation at the time of death.** Certain medical or physical conditions can prevent acceptance of a donation. These include, but are not limited to: organ donation, autopsy, major trauma, recent surgery, amputations, obesity, sepsis, contagious diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis, herpes or other blood infections, and conditions treated with therapeutic radionuclides. Please call or email us regarding a specific condition that might preclude a donation.

**Must I submit general information about my state of health and so forth?**

No, although information about a donor's health and cause of death when available is beneficial to

the Human Gift Registry and enhances the educational uses of the donation. Appropriate questions will be asked after death to assure that the body is acceptable for use by the Human Gift Registry.

**How do I go about donating my body to the health sciences?** The donation forms should be completed and witnessed by two people. West Virginia has three medical institutions authorized to accept donations: Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine Human Gift Registry in Huntington, WV; the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Human Gift Registry in Lewisburg, WV; and the West Virginia University Human Gift Registry in Morgantown, WV. You may designate the institution you wish to receive your body. Send your completed forms to the address listed at the front of this booklet or on our website. Upon receipt of your completed registration form and general information form by the Human Gift Registry, you will be sent a wallet card identifying you as a donor of a Human Gift Registry. This card should be carried with you at all times and your family should be aware that you have registered to be a donor in our program so they may notify us.

**Is it necessary for me to make a will or to contact an attorney in order to legally donate my body?** No. All legal requirements for bequeathing your body are fulfilled by completing the donation forms. It is important that you inform your family, minister and/or physician of this action and of your intention to donate your body. You should keep a copy of your donor forms with your important records.

**Should I make anyone aware of my decision to donate my body to the health sciences?**

Definitely. You should discuss your wishes with members of your family. They should be aware of your intent in order for your wishes to be carried out immediately after death. Time is very important. If your relatives are not informed in advance, the reading of a will or discovery of donation papers may come too late for your gift to be accepted.

**What will be done with the remains after my body is used for medical study?** The body will be cremated. Ashes of bodies utilized by Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine are interred in a mausoleum in Spring Hill Cemetery in Huntington. If a donor prefers to have the ashes returned to the family or a designated recipient (i.e., a family member, funeral director, pastor, etc.), they must specify this wish on the Donor Registration Form at the time of registration by naming up to three individuals. If specific individuals are designated, their willingness to receive the ashes should be confirmed.

When the ashes are ready to be returned, the Human Gift Registry will contact the first person on the list. If we are unable to make contact by phone, email or standard mail within 10 business days, the next person on the list will be contacted, and then the third person on the list. Designees have the right to decline to accept the ashes, in which case subsequent names on the list will be contacted. If none of the designated individuals agree to accept the ashes, the ashes will be permanently interred in the Memorial Vault of the

Human Gift Registry where the donation was made. Only individuals named by the donor will be allowed to receive the ashes. Distribution of ashes by the Human Gift Registry to individuals other than those named on the registration form will require a court order. The Human Gift Registry has no responsibility to initiate or participate in obtaining a court order other than to provide information requested by the court.

**Returning ashes is not a legal obligation of the Human Gift Registry; however, reasonable efforts will be made to comply with requests within its guidelines.**

In accordance with state guidelines, the institution may retain and use anatomical specimens for its educational programs for an indefinite period. Every effort is made to ensure that the cremated remains include the entire donated body. However, in some circumstances, selected body parts may be separated indefinitely for specific purposes such as special educational needs, unique anatomical patterns, or demonstrations of human diseases or surgical modifications. In such cases, the body may be cremated without including the removed parts. The separated parts will be retained permanently at the Human Gift Registry. Their ultimate disposition will be conducted in a respectful and dignified manner.

**Will I be able to have funeral services?** Donation precludes the possibility of having a funeral service with the body present. Therefore, it is appropriate to have a memorial service without the body

present. Such arrangements and costs are the responsibility of the family.

**Does the Human Gift Registry provide funeral services?** No. However, a memorial service, honoring all those persons whose bodies were received during the previous year, are held annually at each institution. Family members and friends are welcome to attend this memorial service. Information regarding the service will be sent to a designated family contact, who may share the details with family and friends.

**Will there be any charges or financial obligations to my survivors?** No. The cost for reasonable transportation, embalming, cremation, and burial in the institution's memorial vault will be covered by the Human Gift Registry, **within limits set by the WV Anatomical Board.** Transportation costs are limited to a 150-air mile radius from the site of donation. The Human Gift Registry will cover the cost of returning ashes if requested at the time of registration to the appropriate recipient. However, if the ashes are returned to the family, the Human Gift Registry will not pay for any expenses incurred after the release of the ashes to the designated recipient.

**When will my body be utilized?** Utilization of one's body may occur at any time after receipt of the body, but it may be several years before utilization is completed.

**Where will the body be used?**  
The body donation program in West Virginia was developed to serve educational and research

needs of the state and region. Most bodies will be used at one of the three major medical institutions in West Virginia (WVU, Marshall and WVSOM). Some may be used at other locations affiliated with these schools or served by their faculty, or by approved programs in other states or countries that have need for them.

**Will the person studying a body be aware of its identity?** No! Identity is strictly confidential. The only information given to the students and health care providers is age at the time of death and the cause of death.

**Do most bodies utilized for the health sciences come from donations?** Yes. The growing cooperation and understanding of the general public, clergy, members of civic organizations and members of medical, dental, legal, and mortuary professions in West Virginia are deeply appreciated.

**May I sell my body to science?** No. State law prohibits the selling of bodies and parts thereof. We do not buy bodies. Your donation should be made in the spirit of a truly priceless gift for mankind and the advancement of health sciences.

**May I donate organs and tissues for transplant?** It is possible to be registered both as an organ donor and a whole-body donor. However, the Human Gift Registries are allowed to accept whole body donation only and do not accept bodies from which organs (except corneas) have been removed. With few exceptions, organ and tissue donation at death will prevent whole body donation



for medical education. We endorse and encourage tissue and organ donation for use in living recipients where possible, but this requires a separate action by donors. Persons who wish to donate their organs for transplant purposes may call the West Virginia Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE) 1-800-366-6777 or the Kentucky Organ Procurement Agency at (800) 525-3456.

**Are there religious considerations?** The beliefs of most religious groups are entirely consistent with the donation and use of one's body for the health sciences. Donation of one's body is morally and legally justified. This gift benefits the lives of other human beings and is an expression of the deepest principles of all religions. If you have any questions, you should consult your religious leader or lodge official.

**Are there ethical standards in the use of my body for health sciences?** Absolutely. This basic professional and moral consideration is very important. The highest professional standards are carefully followed, and the body is treated with dignity and respect. Only authorized persons are involved, and all are thoroughly trained in fundamental requirements.

**In the event of a change of address, should I notify the Human Gift Registry?** Yes. If you move outside of West Virginia or beyond the Tri-State Area, you should make arrangements for the donation of your body to the medical center nearest your new location. Should a donor die while traveling in another part of the country or world, the

family should contact the nearest medical school. In such cases, the high cost of transportation and dangers of deterioration preclude delivery of the body to the medical school originally designated.

**Who should be notified at the time of my death?** The Human Gift Registry should be notified immediately after death at **(304) 696-7382**.

**If I rescind my decision to donate, what steps must be followed?** The Human Gift Registry you designated on the registration form must be notified in writing of your decision.

**How does one's family obtain a death certificate:** One may obtain a certified copy of a death certificate by contacting the West Virginia State Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics, 1800 Washington St., East, Charleston, WV 25305 or call (304) 304-558-2931. Also, certified copies of death certificates may be obtained from the county court house in the county in which the person died.

**May I, or my family, make memorial bequests or gifts to the advancement of research and education in medical science?** Yes. Those wishing to make bequests or gifts in memory of a donor should contact the Human Gift Registry at the medical school of their choice.

***To a Medical Student***

***This is my body,  
the shell of my being  
which is given to you  
in final offering to the world.  
I share the elements of life  
from these old bones,  
these ligaments  
my sinews and my nerves.  
May that life force that ran in me  
shine forth once more  
and pass to you  
the knowledge and the power  
that help sustain  
the miracle of life.***

***Anatomical gift donor***