Human Bequest Program

A lasting legacy
How do I donate my body to medical education and science?

Importance of bequests
Donating your body after death not only has great benefits for society but gives you, the donor, the knowledge that even after death you will continue to contribute to the education of hundreds of future health professionals. The James Cook University (JCU) Human Bequest Program depends entirely on the generosity of individuals who wish to donate their bodies. The program plays an essential role in training the healthcare practitioners of tomorrow, as well as providing scientists, clinicians and surgeons with the requisite knowledge and tools to further advance modern surgery and treatment programs. Those considering registering for the JCU Human Bequest Program should know that the need is great, consequently your gift will be significant and your generosity valued.

Purpose of the JCU program
The Discipline of Anatomy and Pathology, in the Division of Tropical Health and Medicine at JCU, runs a donor bequest program to assist in the teaching of the anatomical sciences to North Queensland’s future doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, nurses, pharmacists, sports scientists and practitioners, and research scientists. Most donations are primarily used for teaching and will be subject to dissection and examination within the Discipline of Anatomy. Some donations however, are used specifically for surgical and medical research.

The use of human bodies for teaching and research is strictly governed by legislation, in particular Queensland Health’s Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 and Transplantation and Anatomy Regulation 2004.

Respect for those who have donated their body to the JCU Human Bequest Program is maintained at all times. The contribution that donors have made to education and science is fully acknowledged. The teaching facilities are situated within a restricted area, with access limited to authorised staff and students.

Who can donate their body?
Donations of whole bodies are accepted from across North Queensland as long as they are received by JCU within the required time frame. While prospective donors need to be over 18, there is no upper age limit.

The following conditions may prevent the university from accepting a donor:

- Distance and late notification of death
- Post mortem examination or coroner’s inquiry
- Certain infectious diseases
- Physical size and condition of the body
- Storage limitations at the university

www.jcu.edu.au/medicine
Procedure after death
At the time of death, the next-of-kin should notify the Human Bequest Coordinator by telephone as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.

Once the Human Bequest Coordinator has completed the necessary checks and certified the cause of death, a decision is made on whether the bequest can be accepted. If the university decides to accept the bequest, the Human Bequest Coordinator will make arrangements for the body to be transported by a professional funeral director to the university, where it will be embalmed to preserve the tissues and prevent deterioration prior to use. At this time, the family can arrange and pay for a private memorial service if they wish to do so. If, for whatever reason, a bequest cannot be accepted, the family is advised to make private funeral arrangements. No financial obligation is accepted by JCU in these circumstances.

Once the initial formalities have been concluded, there is usually no further communication with the family or executors until notification of the date and time of the university memorial service.

Cost
JCU will cover the costs of the transport, cremation and disposal of the bequest, however, any donation that an individual wishes to include in their will would be gratefully received and acknowledged.

Conclusion of the program
At the end of the period of examination, the body is cremated and the ashes scattered in the memorial garden at Woongarra Crematorium. Selected parts may be retained indefinitely for continuing teaching or research purposes.

Thanksgiving Service
An official thanksgiving service is held every three years to commemorate those who have donated their body to medical education and science. Relatives and friends of donors, as well as students and staff of the Division of Tropical Health and Medicine, are invited to attend these ceremonies.

Registering
Individuals who are interested in registering for the JCU Human Bequest Program can contact the Human Bequest Coordinator or visit the webpage to download the relevant forms. Once the donor and next-of-kin are fully aware of the process, they should complete the forms and return them to the university.

A statement such as ‘I wish, if circumstances at the time permit, to bequeath my body after death for the purposes of teaching and research under the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 and direct that it be offered to the Discipline of Anatomy at James Cook University’, can be included in the will. It cannot make the bequest binding should a close family member object; even if the donor has completed the Human Bequest Consent Form and lodged a copy with their will. For this reason, it is suggested that all potential donors discuss their intentions with their family to ensure that no objections are raised at the time of death.

Once registered, the prospective donor will then receive a letter of registration and a donor card for themselves and their next-of-in to keep in their purse of wallet.

For further details click the 'Human Bequest Program' link at: www.jcu.edu.au/medicine or contact:

The Human Bequest Coordinator
Discipline of Anatomy and Pathology
College of Medicine and Dentistry
James Cook University
Townsville QLD 4811

Phone: 07 4781 5022
Email: humanbequestcoordinator@jcu.edu.au

www.jcu.edu.au/medicine
Circumstances that may prevent us from accepting a bequest donation include:

1. Time of notification of death or distance from James Cook University, Townsville. If we are not notified within 24 hours of death or able to obtain the body within 24 hours of death it may be impossible to embalm the body properly due to the natural deterioration processes that can affect a body and its parts.

2. The death of a donor requires a post mortem or a Coroner’s inquiry. For example, suspicious circumstances, death by accident, or whenever a medical practitioner cannot supply a death certificate.

3. If the deceased has contracted a contagious disease prior to death that may pose a health hazard to staff and students, or if the deceased has suffered any of the conditions listed on the next page.

4. Recent surgical procedures or any other situation that results in the deceased body not being whole and that may prevent embalming.

5. When the donor has suffered from severe vascular disease that clogs the arteries of the body and makes it impossible to embalm the body properly.

6. The Human Bequest Program at James Cook University is bound by operational restrictions including periods of non-acceptance.

7. Circumstances that occur beyond our control that make it impossible to embalm the body.

Although donors may have been in good health at the time of their bequest, with the passing of time or for reasons beyond their control, conditions may develop that prevent us honouring their bequest.

In circumstances where it is not possible to accept an offer, the next-of-kin or executor of the estate will become responsible for the funeral arrangements of the deceased. No financial obligation is accepted by the University in these circumstances.

We would like to emphasise that we do everything within our power to honour bequests. However, it is important to explain these circumstances ahead of time as we do not wish to cause any family unnecessary or unexpected grief.
LISTS OF DISEASES THAT MAY AFFECT ACCEPTANCE INTO THE HUMAN BEQUEST PROGRAM

AIDS and HIV
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
Brucellosis
Cholera
Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease
Diabetes
Diphtheria
Ebola Virus Disease
Encephalitis
Hepatitis
Hydatid Disease
Legionnaire’s Disease
Leprosy Leptospirosis
Malaria
Marburg Disease
Meningococcal Infections
Multiple Sclerosis
Multiple drug resistant infections
Obesity or severe emaciation
Peripheral Vascular Disease
Plague (Yersinia infection)
Poliomyelitis
Q Fever
Rabies
Tetanus
Trachoma
Tuberculosis (all forms)
Typhoid & Paratyphoid Fever
Typhus
Yellow Fever
This form is supplied for the convenience of donors and is in no way legally binding if the donors or their relatives at any time wish to alter or revoke any part thereof.

Human Bequest Coordinator  
Discipline of Anatomy  
College of Medicine and Dentistry  
James Cook University  
Townsville QLD 4811

OFFER OF REMAINS FOR ANATOMICAL EXAMINATION

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) ___________________________ Surname  Given names

Home Address: ________________________________________________________________

Postal Address: ______________________________________________________________

Date of Birth: _______ / _______ / _______

Telephone: Home: ____________ Work: ____________ Mobile: ______________

It is my wish that my remains, after death, be made available to the Discipline of Anatomy and Pathology at James Cook University to be used in whatsoever way may be deemed most beneficial for the purposes of anatomical examination or in the study, research, and teaching of anatomy.

I consent to my remains being retained indefinitely. I understand that I will be cremated and my ashes will be scattered. I have discussed this decision with my next of kin. I understand that circumstances may make it impossible for the University to accept my offer.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: __________________

Please ensure that your signature is witnessed by two people in the section overleaf.
WITNESSES

Witness 1:
Signed: ____________________________ Date: _______________________
Full Name: ________________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________

Witness 2:
Signed: ____________________________ Date: _______________________
Full Name: ________________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

MEDICAL HISTORY

Current medical conditions:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Previous surgeries:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Next of Kin

I/We the undersigned SENIOR NEXT-OF-KIN of the above, have NO objection to his/her wishes as stated above.

Note: Ideally, this should be the same person that will call the Human Bequest Coordinator at the time of death – a spouse, relative, friend, neighbour etc.

1. Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____________________________________________

Surname

Given Names

Home Address:  _______________________________________________________

Postal Address:  _______________________________________________________

Telephone: Home: _____________ Work: _____________ Mobile:  ______________

Signed:__________________________ Relationship to Donor:  _________________

2. Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____________________________________________

Surname

Given Names

Home Address:  _______________________________________________________

Postal Address:  _______________________________________________________

Telephone: Home: _____________ Work: _____________ Mobile:  ______________

Signed:__________________________ Relationship to Donor:  _________________

A Thanksgiving Service is held every three years and relatives of those who have donated their bodies to medical science will be invited, together with members of the University staff and health students. Please indicate if you wish to be notified (please tick one box only):

I wish to be notified of the University Thanksgiving Service  

I do not wish to be notified of the University Thanksgiving Service

Please complete the Authority to Release Deceased Body form overleaf, leaving the ‘from’ section blank. We require this form to be on file with the consent form at the time of registration.

Please note, there will be no further communication with relatives/executors once the initial formalities have been concluded with the exception of notification of the date and time of the Thanksgiving Service.
AUTHORITY TO RELEASE DECEASED BODY

I, ___________________________ of: ___________________________
(Print name) (Address)

____________________________
(Address continued)

Being the senior available next of kin, authorise the Funeral Transfer Service nominated by James Cook University to transfer

The late ___________________________
(name of Deceased)

From: ___________________________
(name of Hospital)

To: Discipline of Anatomy, College of Medicine & Dentistry, James Cook University, Townsville.

Signed: ___________________________

Print Name: ___________________________

Relationship to Deceased: ___________________________