

# Body Donation: A Gift of Mankind to Serve Mankind

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## Introduction

Learning to become a doctor is an insurmountable task, but practice and more practice make this accomplishable. Anatomy is one of the most feared subjects of the medical students, though the dissection on cadavers makes it interesting. My students often ask about the cadavers and are inquisitive of how we get them and their preservation. Body donation is one such gift that enables us to study and build up our knowledge.

With the advent of 3D technology and other computerized aids anatomy can be taught and learnt with ease. But cadaveric dissection helps a student to topographically localize the organs. The appreciation of body through tactile and spatial fabrication cannot be achieved by virtual learning [1].

In due course of time the number of medical colleges has increased in the country. With this the demand of cadavers has also risen. With the advent of hands-on workshops amongst surgeons' need of cadavers has further increased [2]. The cadaver to medical/dental students' ratio in various teaching institutes of India is 1:25, optimal being 1:10 [3]. Though cadavers can be obtained by various legal methods, voluntary body donation is the most important source.

Body donation is defined as the act of giving one's body after death for medical research and education. There are two types of whole body donations. The first ones are donors who voluntarily register during their lifetime and on their demise the relatives donate the body. In the second type, the donation is made after an institutional or hospital death by the relatives. In both the cases the final decision lies on the relatives whether they want to proceed with the donation or not [2].

## Body Donation and Anatomy Act

This act enacted by various states in India for supplying of unclaimed bodies to Medical and Teaching institutions for anatomy dissections for students and for other similar purposes. Unclaimed cadavers can be obtained legally by the police. Anatomy act is a State Act published in State Government Gazette, which regulates the use of dead bodies for medical research and education.

In India the Anatomy act was enacted in 1949, which has been adopted in all the states of India. It provides for collection of a

dead body for teaching purpose, only if death occurs in a state hospital or in a public place within the prescribed zone of medical institution, provided the police declared a lapse of 48 hours, that there are no claimants for the body and it could be used for medical education.

### Bodies not suitable for donation

- Decomposed body
- Obesity
- Extreme emaciation
- Suicide or homicide
- Death due to contagious diseases [4].

The noble citizens who make voluntary donations are people from all walks of life i.e., teachers, army personnel, police officers, farmers irrespective of their religion, caste and creed. They approach the department through various awareness programmes, NGOs and even word of mouth. Through a protocol and proper documentation they are registered. All this is done under the anatomy act. The relatives of the registered donors on their demise inform the institute after which the body is donated to the department. Apprehensions of the relatives of how the body of the deceased is treated have to be answered. The procedure of embalming and preservation is explained. Henceforth, an obituary in praise of the donor and the relatives is given.

The significance of body donation is invaluable during the medical studies. Anatomy is considered to be a volatile subject. Books and computerized aids provide the knowledge through texts. This knowledge can be thorough only by dissection. There is no substitute for human body. The experience gained through hands-on training is far superior to artificial substitutes and textbooks. When someone donates their body after death, they help train the next generations of doctors. The use of human body in medical education and research is a centuries old tradition and represents one of the foundations of western medicine [5].

To conclude "This is a gift anyone can give. It has no cost, and it can be tremendously powerful". The religions across the globe approve that body donation is a divine act. 'Nirvana' after death can be achieved through charitable act of gifting the body for learning and teaching.

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