

DONATING YOUR BODY TO SCIENCE

This document has been prepared as a general guide, after many enquiries by U3A members. Some of this is translated from Spanish. If you want to donate your body, or need to report a death, the contact details, and the address of the local medical facility, should be your first points of reference.

Medical research

It was as late as the 17th and 18th centuries that serious documentation of research into the workings of the human body began to be undertaken. How such bodies were obtained for research is debatable and questionable in the law of the time, but the work was the foundation for many of today's textbooks and on-going medical research.

The latter part of the 20th century saw legislation introduced for the provision of human remains for research purposes, and most countries developed schemes whereby people could properly arrange the donation of their bodies, after death, to a teaching establishment.

The law in Spain

Only the donor can offer his or her body for teaching purposes. You cannot offer **both** your whole body **and** individual organs. You have to choose between the two.

This emotive subject requires considerable thought on the part of the donor, since completed documentation in this regard will be regarded as a final intention, and irrevocable.

You need to bear in mind

Any possibility of the presence of any contagious disease being present, or the body being held for pathological purposes, will make the donation unacceptable.

In particular, none of the following are now acceptable:

- Hepatitis B and C
- AIDS
- HIV positive
- Bodies which have undergone judicial procedures, such as an autopsy
- Amputations
- Deaths occurring after surgery where the wound has not healed
- Death due to an infectious or contagious disease
- Cruizfeldt Jakob Disease (CJD) variant i.e., BSE (Mad Cow Disease)
- Gross overweight (obesity)
- Gross underweight (emaciation)

All family members of the donor, close friends, etc., should be made fully aware of the donor's wishes, and what will happen following the donor's death. The body **must** be passed to the teaching establishment **within 36 hours** to allow the preparation process to proceed.

This of course means that there will be no 'remains' to cremate and/or bury, and therefore the 'normal' funeral procedure is changed. This has to be discussed in advance with those who care, so that they know and understand the wishes of the donor, and are properly prepared. There is no reason why some form of memorial service cannot be held to give thanks for the life of the donor.

The procedure

Once the above is clear to all concerned, the donor can apply to the local teaching establishment.

The donor will receive self-duplicating forms in Spanish together with a letter, possibly in English. The forms should be completed, witnessed by a friend or neighbour, and signed. The top copies should then be returned, **with identification documentation**, to the address below:

Departamento de Histología y Anatomía
Facultad de Medicina
Universidad Miguel Hernández
Ctra. Alicante – Valencia s/n
03550 San Juan de Alicante
Tel: 96 591 9434 (in Spanish)

You may download and read the following:

- [the application form \(in Spanish\);](#)
- [the application form \(in English\);](#)
- [the accompanying letter \(in Spanish\);](#)
- [the accompanying letter \(in English\);](#)
- [a list of the funeral directors authorised to take part in this scheme.](#)

There is now a charge for this service, of 1,000 euros, payable to the funeral director who collects the body. At that time, the funeral director will issue the relatives with confirming paperwork. This paperwork is very important, as the relatives will have to take it with them and present it to the Justice of the Peace for the official registration of the donor's death. Death certificates will be prepared and handed to the relatives in due course—normally about 5 days—when they will be given 3 original Spanish death certificates along with 3 International death certificates.

Important: any Alicante University registrations documentation issued before the 30th of April 2016 is no longer valid. If you have already registered, you will need to re-register, otherwise the body donation will not be accepted.

Help is available from Keith Wildman of AFPO, on **634 394 664**.

The final confirmation correspondence will be a letter of thanks with contact telephone numbers. These are for contact purposes at the time of death and should be given to those who will act at this time for the donor. They will need to contact the establishment via the telephone numbers provided, whereupon the donor's body will be collected by the funeral director (see above) and taken to the establishment.

Here, for obvious reasons, the body becomes a number, and passes through a preparation process before being accepted in the teaching areas.

There will come a time when the remains will no longer be of benefit for teaching purposes. They will then resume their proper identity, be taken reverently to a local crematorium, cremated and the ashes strewn on hallowed ground.

Finally

Important: if it is required that the ashes be returned to the family, this must be made clear when the donation papers are being completed, as they cannot be asked for by the family later.

The Calpe U3A

U3A Calpe recognises that this is a serious and emotive subject, and recommends that those considering donation fully consult with family, friends, etc., and ensure that their wishes are accurately made known.

We also gratefully acknowledge the help and assistance of Lionel Sharpe.