

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY
Anatomical Gift Program

*Providing an enduring gift for medical
education and your community*



From time to time, people talk about “donating their body to science” when they die. But, similar to organ donation or estate planning, they often may not know what that entails, how to go about it, or even how to express their wishes to their loved ones.

If you are considering such a gift, this brochure will provide you with information about the Anatomical Gift Program at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. Our goal is to help you walk through the decision-making process and learn about the procedures so that, should you choose to gift your body to the Medical School, you will have a complete understanding of how to go about it and the potential benefit your gift will be toward science and education.

What an Anatomical Gift Means

Donating your whole body—making an anatomical gift—to the Medical School is a lasting and valuable contribution to medical education. These gifts to our Medical School are essential to instructing medical students in human anatomy and are invaluable for the training of future physicians and medical specialists. Without such gifts, medical education would suffer immeasurably. The University of Rochester is grateful for the generosity of those who donate their bodies to the medical school and the advancement of medical education.



Eligibility to Donate

Most adults are eligible for anatomical donation. The medical school uses gifted bodies to study the structure of the whole human body. We accept and use as many bodies as possible. However there may be certain circumstances that make it inadvisable for us to accept a donation. If you are considering a whole body anatomical donation and you choose to plan for it, you should also make alternate arrangements with a funeral director in the event we cannot accept your donation. Disqualifying circumstances may include when an autopsy has been performed, the presence of an infectious or contagious disease, or obesity. Please do not let this deter you from planning a donation. Without your initial statement of intent to donate, our program would not exist.

Planning is important because time is a factor in anatomical donations. Usually, donor bodies are embalmed as soon as we receive them and they are stored until needed. On occasion, the University of Rochester may transfer a donor to another institution legally authorized to receive anatomical gifts. However, all donors are cremated at the UR. It is our policy not to accept a donor who has been deceased for more than 24 hours.



How to Donate

In New York State, a donor must be at least 18 years of age and of sound mind. Donation forms are available from the Medical School by calling (585) 275-2592 or on our website www.urmc.rochester.edu/anatomical-gift

The donation form is completed in duplicate and signed in the presence of and by two witnesses, as required by the Public Health Law and does not need to be notarized. Witnesses must be at least 18 years of age and should be family members or friends. When you have completed the form, you can mail it to the Anatomical Gift Program at the address provided on the donation form. It is also advisable to include a statement regarding your wishes for whole body donation in your Will.

Within three weeks of receiving your donation form, we will send you a yellow pocket card acknowledging your intention to donate. Please allow three weeks for your card to arrive. Once it does, please keep it with you at all times. If you are admitted to a hospital or other health care facility, please let the staff know that in the event of your death, you are a whole body donor.

Organ and Body Donation

A person may also donate his or her eyes and still donate their whole body to our program. However, the recovery of other internal organs for transplant, such as heart, lungs, and kidneys requires extensive surgery and generally means that the body will not be acceptable for whole body donation to our program.

If you wish, you may donate your eyes to organizations such as the Lions Eye Bank at Rochester, but you must make these arrangements separately from your whole body anatomical donation. Directly contact the Lions Eye Bank at Rochester. They will assist you with the arrangements. At the time of your death, it is your family's responsibility to contact the Eye Bank regarding your donation to them.

Informing Your Relatives

We recommend that you tell your family about your decision to donate, in particular your immediate next of kin. The University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry will not accept your donated body if your nearest living relative objects to the donation after your death. We encourage you to make your donation known to your family, close friends, minister and attorney.



At the Time of Death . . .

After a physician has pronounced the death, he or she signs the death certificate to certify the time and cause of death. After the physician completes and signs the medical portion of the death certificate, the University of Rochester should be notified by your family.

Instructions for Your Survivors at the Time of Death

At the time of your death, your survivors should call the Medical School as soon as possible. This number can also be found on the back of this brochure and on the back of the yellow donor card. We will work with your survivors and advise them of the procedures to follow. The yellow donor card is verification that you are pre-registered in our program, and should accompany your body when transported to the Medical School.

Once a donated body has been received at the University of Rochester, there can be no viewing.

Procedures and Expenses

Procedures and costs may vary depending on where death occurs and whether or not private funeral directors are involved. No casket is required for transportation to this University if death occurs in or near Rochester. If transportation is by common carrier from a distant location, all regulations for proper containment must be met. All arrangements for transportation and associated expenses incurred are the responsibility of your survivors or estate.

- **When death occurs at a local hospital or nursing home within Monroe County**, the University of Rochester Medical Center funeral director will arrange transport of the body to the Medical School at no cost to the family. The Medical Center funeral director will file the death certificate with the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Monroe County. Your family may need to obtain copies from the Monroe County Department of Health for legal purposes. See “Obtaining Copies of the Death Certificate” for details.
- **When death occurs at a private residence** or a place other than a hospital or nursing home, your family should arrange for your body to be transported by a private funeral director to the Medical School. Your family or estate is responsible for the charges of a private funeral director for the transportation and associated costs. We require one photo copy of the original death certificate and a Burial/Transit Permit.



- **When death occurs outside Monroe County,** your donation is still welcomed, but the expense of transporting your body to Rochester will be the responsibility of your survivors or your estate. The transporting funeral director must deliver a photo copy of the original death certificate and a Burial/Transit Permit to the Medical Center funeral director.
- **If death occurs while on vacation or at a distant location, your family may:**

Contact your home town funeral director or a local funeral director and have your body transported back to the University of Rochester Medical Center. All expenses incurred would be assumed by your family or estate.



Or, to lessen the cost, they may wish to contact the nearest medical school where the death occurred. We have reciprocal agreements with most other medical schools throughout the United States and Canada. Final acceptance by another medical school, of course, is contingent upon their policy regarding gifts and donations. You should make your wishes known to your family in case this situation should occur.

- **If you move outside New York State,** you may wish to consider making a new donation to a medical school in your new locality. Once you have been pre-registered into their program, send us a letter revoking your donation here. Similar programs exist throughout the United States and Canada.

Changing Your Decision

You may change your mind and revise or revoke your donation at any time. Completing a donation form does not in any way comprise a contract. It is only a pronouncement of your wishes and intentions. Your original donation form will be returned to you upon our receipt of your written request should you wish to revoke your donation.

Should you marry, remarry, or change your surname or address, we ask you to inform us in writing. We will note the change and send you new donation forms to update our records. You will also be issued a new yellow donor pocket card.

Payment is Prohibited

The laws of New York and all other states specifically prohibit the giving of “anything of value” in return for a whole body gift or donation of organs. This means that no cash or payment of any kind can be made to a donor or their survivors.

Additional Family Responsibilities

Your family is responsible for arrangements for funeral services or memorial services, death notices, and notification of death to the Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration, Railroad Retirement Board, or any private pension plans. Your local funeral director or the University funeral director can advise you on these matters.



Funeral or Memorial Service: A Choice

A funeral service is a service held in the presence of the body. A memorial service is one held without the body present. Both are intended to serve the emotional needs of survivors. The Medical School prefers to receive the body immediately after death without embalming. As such, we may suggest that you consider a memorial service over a funeral service. If, however, a funeral is preferred, the body must be embalmed by your funeral director for funeralization purposes. It is very important that your funeral director notify the University funeral director for specific embalming instructions, so that your body will remain acceptable for donation after the funeral service has taken place.

Final Disposition of the Body

Upon completion of the use of a donated body (most commonly two years later), the remains are cremated at the University's expense. On occasion, a portion of the donation may be retained and archived for teaching purposes. In accordance with the donor's written wishes, the cremated remains are either returned to the family, who will assume responsibility for the final disposition, or they can be buried in our communal interment site at South Bristol, New York.

Changes regarding the disposition of your cremated remains may be made by your survivors. We require that a written, notarized request from your legal next of kin or executor of your estate, be received in our office within two weeks of your death in order to make changes. Telephone requests cannot be honored.

The Burial Site

Our communal burial site is located in South Bristol, New York, at the top of Gannett Hill. Admittance is by appointment only, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday, between May 1 and before the first heavy snowfall (usually early November). For visitor safety, visits are limited to that time due to weather conditions at the site. For admittance, please contact our main office at least 48 hours in advance, at (585) 275-2592 to ensure the gates are unlocked for your admittance.

Obtaining Copies of the Death Certificate

- **For deaths occurring within Monroe County:**
Per NYS Public Health Law, only your surviving spouse, parent, child, sibling, or the estate attorney is automatically entitled to obtain certified copies of the death certificate. All others must provide documentation of need for the record or present a notarized letter of permission from an authorized person to acquire them. To obtain certified copies, they will need to contact the:

Monroe County Vital Records
111 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620
Ph: (585) 753-5141
www.monroecounty.gov/birthdeath

- **For deaths occurring outside Monroe County,** your family will need to check their local listings for that community's Local Registrar of Vital Records at the City Clerks, Town Hall, or Village Office where the death occurred. A local Funeral Director can also be very helpful with this.



Please keep this brochure with your donation form for future reference.

Photographs were taken at our burial site in South Bristol, New York.



"Dedicated to individuals who have donated their bodies for anatomical study so others might live."

Contact Information

**To reach us for information
and/or donation registration
forms, contact:**

Anatomical Gift Program
The University of Rochester
School of Medicine & Dentistry
601 Elmwood Avenue, Box 603
Rochester, NY 14642
(585) 275-2592



To reach us at the time of death:

Call (585) 275-2592

8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Monday through Friday

Or (585) 275-2270
Evenings, weekends and holidays

Please have the donor's pocket card
with you when you call.

For information regarding
eye donation contact:
Lions Eye Bank at Rochester
100 Corporate Woods
Rochester, NY 14623
(585) 272-7890



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