



Dear PCA support group members and others,

One of the most precious gifts a person can make is a brain tissue gift to the research community. What is a brain tissue gift? This is the gift of your brain to the University of Colorado School of Medicine PCA research program after your death. While this is difficult to speak about during your life, making your wishes known to loved ones often removes the burden on them to make decisions for you at the time of your death. We all have something precious to give and whether that is time, money, or the gift of organ donation, we at the University of Colorado School of Medicine will honor and respect your wishes in the best manner possible. Giving back will get us one step closer to understanding and, ultimately, treating a disease that is extremely daunting in life but also shows us what makes us human: compassion, love, and generosity.

Please see the attached document to review how to arrange for a brain donation and what to consider in doing so. As always, we are here to walk with you on this journey through the many valleys and the many mountain tops.

In gratitude,

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DEPARTMENT OF NEUROLOGY
DIVISION OF NEURO-OPHTHALMOLOGY



INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

University of Colorado Hospital provides autopsies at no charge to families for patients who have been or are being seen at University of Colorado Hospital or its satellite clinics within the last 5 years prior to death. Please note: This does not include the University Health institutions of Poudre Valley Hospital, Medical Center of the Rockies, or Memorial Health at the current time.

Cost: The only cost to the family for the autopsy evaluation is the transport fee imposed by the mortuary for transportation of the body to University of Colorado Hospital morgue. These costs are typically incorporated into the total memorial package charged to the family by the mortuary.

Type of Exam: As plans are made for a family member's autopsy, thought and discussion should be given to what type of evaluation is desired, as this information will need to be given at the time consent is obtained. Options include:

- Full evaluation (whole body evaluation including brain)
- Chest and abdomen only (Does NOT include head or neck)
- Brain-only evaluation (brain and spinal cord, with nerve and muscle biopsies)

Keep in mind that if your family has plans for a possible viewing or open casket service, this does not automatically limit the evaluation to chest and abdomen only. University of Colorado Hospital personnel can evaluate the brain and still allow for open casket services as long as we know the family's wishes ahead of time.

Timing: Every attempt is made to perform the autopsy examination the same day that consent is obtained, but depending on transport arrival and our schedule, the evaluation may take place the following day. The autopsy itself takes no more than 2-3 hours, usually less. Directly after the autopsy evaluation, we will contact the mortuary to transport the body back to their facility and plans for any services can then proceed.

Preplanning: It is important that prearrangements be made through the Office of Decedent Affairs (720-848-4356) prior to your loved one's death. Any questions you may have about the autopsy procedure itself, timing details, or the consent process can be addressed during this phone conversation. Preplanning can be accomplished weeks or even months ahead of time; information will be kept on file and updated as status

reports are received from you or your loved one's physicians. Please note that consent for autopsy must be provided by the patient's legal next of kin. This can be accomplished only **after** the patient's death. Consent is simple and can be given by phone.

Another important preplanning decision is that of deciding upon and contracting with a mortuary ahead of time. Make sure the mortuary is aware of your plans for autopsy at University. Additionally, ensure that your loved one's caregivers also have this same information. Having all involved parties mindful of your plans will hopefully allow a smoother process when the time comes. In addition, it is always diagnostically valuable to move the deceased into a cooler environment as soon as possible after death; if caregivers are aware of this need, they can lessen the burden on grieving families by having this knowledge and facilitating the process.

Contact information is as follows:

Office of Decedent Affairs (7:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Monday – Friday, Saturday 8 AM - 4 PM) 720-848-4356

Complete autopsy results are generally available in approximately 8 weeks; a pending death certificate is issued in the interim. Reports are sent out by Medical Records (720-848-1031) only by request from the legal next of kin. This normally requires a properly executed release form as well as a copy of the death certificate.