



## Pathology & Biology Section – 2004

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### G4 The Use of Whole Body Donors in Forensic Research

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After attending this presentation, the attendees will learn how whole body donors can facilitate research in forensic science.

Whole body donors are used everyday for the advancement of medical research and education. These studies include, but are not limited to, surgical trials, biomechanical research, and emergency procedures, as well as the academics of anatomy as it is taught through dissection. On the contrary, research in forensic science is generally prompted by current casework and is performed as a byproduct of an investigation. It is important to note that the use of whole body donors for studies could help answer questions before cases even occur. Many fields within the realm of forensic science can benefit from these altruists in our society. Included are the disciplines of forensic entomology, odontology, pathology, biology, anthropology, and toxicology and can extend into aspects of the physical sciences as well.

One location has facilitated human donor studies important to the associated fields. However, they are conducted in a manner that is specific for the climate, flora and fauna of that area. In other areas, decomposition studies and the like have been performed with the use of porcine materials as a substitute for human materials. These studies are not reported here as invalid, but in order to apply the most appropriate and applicable science to matters of evidence, it is imperative that the most realistic methods and materials are used. Recognizably, the diversity of these United States requires the application of continuous studies to varied geographical areas and academic disciplines to achieve the best and most accurate results.

Thousands of people each year become donors to the 112 university sanctioned whole body donation programs throughout the U.S. The lack of research is not due to the unavailability of human specimens, but is a result of low numbers of requests by appropriate researchers. This may be attributed to the idea that many researchers are just not aware of the possibilities that exist for their projects. Questions regarding the ethical uses of whole bodies for science may further reduce the use of human remains by forensic researchers. It is the intention of the writers to provide a comprehensive presentation of the utilization of whole body donors to facilitate forensic research in the most appropriate manner possible.

**Whole Body Donor, Forensic Research, Forensic Science**