

## RETURN OR DISPOSAL OF BODY PARTS/HUMAN TISSUE POLICY

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Reviewed: May 2016

**Policy Applies to:** All Mercy Hospital staff and credentialed specialists who handle body parts/tissue and / or receive a request from a patient for the return of body parts/tissue.

### Related Standards:

- Health and Disability Sector Standards NZS 8134:2008
- EQUIP standards 1.3.1 – Health care and services are appropriate; 1.6.2 – Consumers are informed of their rights and responsibilities; 1.6.3 – The organisation makes provision for consumers from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Management of Healthcare Waste Standard NZS 4304:2002

### Rationale:

Mercy Hospital supports the return of body parts / tissue wherever possible to those for whom it has personal or cultural significance

The following principles apply to the return or disposal of body parts/tissue:

- Every consumer has the right to make a decision about the return or disposal of any body parts removed or obtained in the course of a health care procedure – *Right 7.9 of the Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights 1996.*
- No body part or bodily substance removed or obtained in the course of a health care procedure may be stored, preserved or used unless:
  - a) With the informed consent of the consumer;
  - b) For the purposes of research that has received the approval of an Ethics Committee – *Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights; Right 7 (10) amended 11 June 2004.*

Regardless of how minor the body part/tissue is perceived to be by staff, the cultural/religious needs of the patient will guide best practice for the return of body parts/tissue. However, we have a public health responsibility as well as a responsibility to our patients. For this reason, tissue that is known to be infectious or cytotoxic e.g. infected tonsils or tissue treated by chemotherapy or radiotherapy cannot be returned.

Cultural support is available for patients and can be accessed through the Mercy Hospital nursing staff.

### Definitions:

**Body part:** A solid discrete mass of tissue, limbs, organs or part of the body composed of more than one tissue that forms a structural unit responsible for a particular function and is removed from the patient during the course of surgery.

This includes but is not limited to organs or parts of organs e.g. heart valves, limbs, hair, teeth and products of conception.

**Tissue:** A collection of cells specialised to perform a particular function derived from a living human source.

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**Informed Consent:** A reasoned decision made by a patient based on sufficient information being provided, in such a way the patient can understand the rationale and consequences of their decision. The credentialed specialist is responsible for ensuring the patient receives appropriate information.

**Histology:** Examination of tissue or body fluids under a microscope. Tissue at Mercy Hospital will be sent to Southern Community Laboratories.

### Objectives:

- To ensure patients (or parents/guardians for children/infants/babies) receive sufficient information to make an informed decision about the examination/testing of tissue and the disposal or return of body parts/tissue.
- To ensure that body parts are handled, released or disposed of in a safe and culturally acceptable manner and in accordance with relevant legislation.

### Implementation:

- Patient information booklet on process for the return of body parts is available in consultants' rooms, reception, theatre and wards.
- New staff is made aware of the process and how to access policy information as part of their orientation.
- Inservice Education session on policy updates.
- Policy Updates advised at HOD meetings; HOD's inform existing staff

### Evaluation:

- Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire / consumer feedback
- Complaints process
- Incident forms

### Associated Documents

#### External

- The Code of Health & Disability Services Consumers Rights 2004, Right 7 and 7.9
- The Health & Disability Services Code 1994
- The Human Tissue Act 2008

#### Internal

- Waste Management Policy
- Collection and Handling of Specimens Within the Theatre, Clinical Services Work Manual
- Clinical Tissue, Information for Patients - refer Appendix 4
- Cultural Policy
- Mercy Hospital Tikaka Best Practice Guidelines

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### Process

#### **Disposal of Body Parts and Clinical Tissue Not Requested by Patient, Family/Whanau:**

- Body parts and clinical tissue (that is smaller in size than a bone joint) must be disposed of in hazardous waste biohazard yellow bag.
- Body parts larger than a bone joint must be sent to the Dunedin Hospital mortuary; they will arrange for cremation via a funeral director. The body part/ clinical tissue must be double bagged, and wrapped to ensure the item is not visible and transported in a sealed box. Transfer documentation (appendix 2) must be completed - tick box for cremation - and sent with the item.
- Transport of the item to the Dunedin Hospital mortuary should be arranged through Dunedin Taxis, Ph 477 7777. Tissue must only be delivered during office hours.

#### **Return of Body Parts and Clinical Tissue Requested by Patient, Family/Whanau:**

- Where a body part is requested / claimed by the patient or family/whanau, Mercy Hospital shall determine if the part represents a risk to the public or the environment prior to its release.
- In cases where the organisation is concerned that release of the body part represents an unacceptable risk and there is dispute with those wishing to take possession of the body part, the Director of Clinical Services or delegate should seek guidance from the Medical Officer of Health (at Public Health South, Ph 474 1700).
- If the body part is able to be released, it must be double bagged in plastic bags and then placed in a paper bag to ensure the contents are not visible. The plastic bag and paper bag should both have patient identification labels. Alternatively an opaque leak proof container can be used. Should the body part need to be stored in fluid, normal saline must be used.

#### **Nursing Staff responsibilities following a patient's request for the return of body part/tissue:**

- If the patient is undergoing tonsillectomy, DSU nurses will ascertain whether it is important to the patient to keep the tissue for cultural reasons or whether they are just curious to see what the tonsils look like. If the latter, the DSU nurse will explain the risks associated with the disposal of infected tissue in the community and will offer to provide a photo instead. This will be documented on the pre-op checklist.
- Where a patient undergoing tonsillectomy does wish to retain the tissue, the nurses will follow the usual process, outlined below.
- DSU/ward nurse to ensure patient receives a copy of return of body parts / tissue information booklet.
- Document request on
  - a) clinical pathway, and
  - b) pre-op check list
- Have patient complete "return of body part" form (appendix 3); place this in the front of the clinical record.
- Notify theatre staff / surgeon as per actions on clinical pathway.
- Prior to transferring the patient from DSU to Operating Theatre Suite, theatre staff view pre-op checklist to confirm whether the patient wants the body part/tissue returned.

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- At time of surgery, theatre nurse collects body part/tissue and places in an appropriate container. The container is to be clearly labelled with content, patient's identification details and marked for "return to patient"
- Body part/tissue is returned to the ward with the patient unless surgeon wishes it to be sent for histology first.
- Patient or family / whanau member nominated by the patient shall sign the "return of body part form" (appendix 3) to acknowledge receipt of the body part/tissue. This form is retained in the patient's clinical record.
- If the patient remains in hospital and the body part/tissue cannot be collected immediately by family/ whanau it will be sent to the Dunedin Hospital mortuary for storage, and transfer documentation (Transfer of Body Part to Mortuary - appendix 2) completed by ticking the box for 'storage' The body part/tissue should be clearly labelled with the patient details including NHI and marked "return to patient".
- Storage of body parts at Dunedin Hospital Mortuary is for a maximum of 6 weeks.
- Patient or family/whanau must be told to contact mortuary staff at Dunedin Hospital (phone 03 470 93141) with regard to collecting the body part/tissue. When collecting the body part / tissue, the patient / family will be asked for identification and are required to sign a form acknowledging receipt of the body part/tissue.

### **Body part/tissue sent for histology:**

- Theatre nurse informs the laboratory of the patient's request to have body part/tissue returned and clearly documents this on the laboratory form.
- Laboratory staff will be responsible for notifying patient in writing when the body part/ tissue is ready for collection.

### **Acknowledgements**

- Waikato Hospital DHB
- Southern DHB