Why Brain Donation?

A Legacy of Hope

THE NIH NEUROBIOBANK

www.neurobiobank.nih.gov

One of the most compelling areas of medical research is aimed at understanding the human brain and what goes wrong in disease. Research using brain tissue donated following death has allowed researchers to answer important questions about many brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Huntington's. For example, much of what is known about Alzheimer's disease was determined from studies using human brain tissue.

> ***Disorders of the brain affect millions of children and adults, dramatically altering their lives and those of their families.***

Scientists are now also using brain tissue to investigate the effects of traumatic brain injury, and the genes involved in disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, autism, and multiple sclerosis.

Brain tissue collected following death is necessary to conduct research on human brain diseases. This tissue is made freely available to qualified researchers through resources called brain banks, which acquire, store, and distribute it. As methods for studying genes and how they influence growth, behavior, development, and disease become more powerful, the availability of brain tissue becomes even more important.

Discoveries made possible by tissue donation provide hope to families affected by brain disease.

The limited supply of donated human tissues is a rate-limiting factor in progress to understanding these diseases.

Studies using donated brain tissue following death are the most promising avenue for researchers to learn how to prevent and cure disorders of the brain. Discoveries made possible by tissue donation provide hope to families affected by brain disease.

One donated brain can provide tissue for hundreds of independent research studies. The gift of brain donation enables discoveries that will have a lasting impact. The legacy of donation offers future generations the possibility of improved health.

While this research depends on tissue from persons diagnosed with conditions affecting the brain, there is also great need for brain tissue from persons unaffected by brain disease. Characterizing brain tissue from healthy individuals and unaffected family members offers a way to identify and understand the changes that result in disease and importantly, why some who may be at risk never develop symptoms.

The legacy of donation offers the opportunity for future generations to enjoy all the benefits of full health.

What is the NIH Neurobiobank?

The NIH Neurobiobank is an effort by the National Institutes of Health to coordinate the network of brain banks it supports in the United States. The brain tissue is collected, evaluated, stored, and made available to researchers in a way consistent with the highest standards for research. It also ensures protection of the privacy and wishes of donors. Brain tissue is precious. Networking these centers makes it more likely that precious tissue can be made available to the greatest number of scientists.

As with donation of organs and tissues for transplantation, the best way to donate brain tissue for research is to contact a brain bank in advance.

The NIH Neurobiobank website—www.neurobiobank.nih.gov—has answers to questions about brain donation, links to brain banks across the country, and information on how arrangements are made to donate the brain for research.

To learn more about the importance of brain donation, and how to make arrangements for donation, please go to www.neurobiobank.nih.gov.

Please note: At this time, registering as an organ donor does not identify a person as a potential brain donor for research; brain donation is a separate process.

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