

Acknowledgement in cadaver studies: Are we paying due respect?

M J S Jayarathna¹

¹*Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya*

“THEIR DEATHS BEAR THE
HONORABLENESS OF BEEING
ALTRUISTIC HELP FOR THE LIVING”

Professor Walter Thiel (1)

“ALIVE WE THOUGHT BEYOND OUR
LIVES TO GIVE OUR BODIES AS A GIFT
FOR YOU TO READ”

Marble plaque by artist Tom Philips at Cardiff
University Dissecting room (1)

Medical education revolves around the basic
sciences and human anatomy is considered as
a key fundamental subject in preparing a
medical student towards being an efficient
physician.

Learning anatomy through human cadaveric
dissections and specimens has played an
important role since our forefathers and we,
the current anatomists have far more access
to cadaveric specimens than them as at
present people are grateful to donate their
bodies for the sake of science and medical
education. Then the question arises; Are we
feeling grateful towards them? Are we
giving them the due respect and the
necessary recognition?

Although most institutions hold memorial
services for those who have donated their
bodies for betterment medical education and
anatomical research, their selfless attempt is
not being recognized or acknowledgement

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/slaj.v7i2.200>

Sri Lanka Anatomy Journal 2023; 7(II): 82–84

Corresponding author

M J S Jayarathna

E-mail: jayamini.jayarathna@med.pdn.ac.lk



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4716-290X>

CC BY 4.0



This is an Open Access article distributed
under the terms of the Creative Commons
Attribution 4.0 license (unless stated
otherwise) which permits unrestricted
use, distribution and reproduction in any
medium, provided the original work is
properly cited. Copyright is retained by
the author(s).

required by most of the anatomical conferences or specialty clinical and basic science journals/ publishers and most authors/ research papers omit this part (2,3).

The advancements of science occur through anatomical research benefit the individuals of the donors' society. Therefore, it is necessary to build a healthy relationship between the anatomists and society (4,5). Usually, the donor is acknowledged while living or after death in the form of a certificate with or without their photograph. For this purpose, most institutions with their medical students conduct memorial services and thanksgiving ceremonies, which is a way of showing gratitude and a good practice (1,4,5).

Not every researcher is keen to obtain ethical approval from relevant institutions or local ethical committees to conduct anatomical research or acknowledge the donor-cadavers. But the trend to acknowledge the donor-cadaver-patients in the articles publication is on positive side since 2013 based on Benninger's proposal on formal acknowledgement of donor-cadaver-patients. This is supported by some publishers and journals as they now request to acknowledge the cadavers used for the research (whether it is donor or not) from all submissions. But without the journal pressure, if an author includes an acknowledgement for the donor-cadaver in their article, that will reflect their true intention and heartfelt gratitude towards the donor-cadavers (4).

The Anatomical Quality Assurance (AQUA) checklist, developed by Tomaszewski K. A. et al (2016), the its primary aim was to strengthen

the structured reporting style of original anatomical studies, also includes a checkbox (Item 27) for acknowledgement where the author acknowledges individual(s), institution(s) or third parties who significantly contributed to the study. Here, donor-cadaver-patients should be included under "individual(s)" category (6).

In 2018 consensus guidelines for uniform reporting of ethics in anatomy research were established based on the AQUA checklist. The guideline strongly recommends that authors acknowledge the donor-cadavers in the acknowledgement section (AQUA Item 27) (7).

To standardize and encourage the researchers on using proper acknowledgement towards donor-cadavers in their publications, some authors have suggested the following. "The author(s) would like to recognize those who graciously donated themselves to enable this research" (2). "The authors sincerely thank those who donated their bodies to science so that anatomical research could be performed. Results from such research can potentially increase mankind's overall knowledge that can then improve patient care. Therefore, these donors and their families deserve our highest gratitude" (3).

Iwanaga et al., recommend an acknowledgement section that will follow the conclusion, and this is to be applied to any research using donor-cadavers/ cadaveric tissues. Gratitude should be expressed both toward the donor-cadaver and their family members.

The current leaders of anatomical societies are providing guidance to take the anatomical research in to a new arena and help to uplift the quality of the studies, journal sand publications by way of creating checklists, formulating guidelines, and nurturing discussions on ethical backgrounds of anatomical research. It is our duty to learn and practice then to educate and encourage young researchers and students to acknowledge donor-cadavers and their families not only in memorial services but also in their publications which include both journal articles and conference presentations.

Acknowledgements

To all donor-cadaver-patients and their family members for their humble gesture so that anatomical research could be performed.

Conflicts of interests: None

Funding: None

References

1. Biasutto SN, Sharma N, Weiglein AH, Benia FM, McBride J, Bueno-López JL, Kramer B, Blyth P, Mirna D, Barros MD, Ashiru O, Ballesteros LE, Moxham BJ, Krishnan S. 2014. 1;HUMAN BODIES TO TEACH ANATOMY: IMPORTANCE AND PROCUREMENT – EXPERIENCE WITH CADAVER DONATION. *Rev Arg de Anat Clin.* 6(2):72–86.
2. Benninger B. 2013. Formally Acknowledging donor-cadaver-patients in the Basic and Clinical Science Research Arena. *Clinical Anatomy.* 26:810-813.
3. Iwanaga J, Singh V, Ohtsuka A, Hwang Y, Kim H, Morys J, Ravi KS, Ribatti D, Trainor PA, Sañudo JR, Apaydin N, Şengül G, AlbertineKH, Walocha JA, Loukas M, Duparc F, Paulsen K, Sol MD, Addis P, Hegazy A, Tubbs RS. 2020. Acknowledging the use of human cadaveric tissues in research papers: Recommendations from anatomical journal editors. *Clinical Anatomy.* 34(1):2–4.
4. Gürses İA, Coşkun O, Gürtekin B, Kale A. 2016. The amount of information provided in articles published in clinical anatomy and surgical and radiologic anatomy regarding human cadaveric materials and trends in acknowledging donors/cadavers. *Surgical and Radiologic Anatomy.* 5;38(10):1225–31.
5. Winkelmann A, Heinze AK, Hendrix S. 2015. Acknowledging Tissue donation: Human Cadaveric Specimens in Musculoskeletal Research. *Clinical Anatomy.* 19;29(1):65–9.
6. Tomaszewski KA, Henry BM, Kumar Ramakrishnan P, Roy J, Vikse J, Loukas M, Tubbs RS, Walocha JA. 2016. Development of the Anatomical Quality Assurance (AQUA) Checklist: Guidelines for reporting original anatomical studies. *Clinical Anatomy.* 25;30(1):14–20.
7. Henry BM, Vikse J, Pekala P, Loukas M, Tubbs RS, Walocha JA, Jones DG, Tomaszewski KA. 2018. Consensus Guidelines for the Uniform Reporting of Study Ethics in Anatomical Research within the Framework of the Anatomical Quality Assurance (AQUA) Checklist. *Clinical Anatomy.* 25;31(4):521–4.