

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on Give and take? Human bodies in medicine and research between April 2010 and July 2010. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Dr Paul M. Rea

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

Question 2

Human bodily material which results in the generation of a new life is one that should be treated with great caution as to its uses whether that be in conception, or examination in detail of that specimen without the end result of conception. A fascinating area of development is in the use of human material which is able to regenerate e.g. liver, which can be used for transplantation especially for children. The wonderful regenerating capacity of the liver could be so crucial in further developments - especially as to how it is able to regenerate itself. Maybe research should focus on the ability for self-generation of that organ - what causes it to regenerate, and also how do the hepatocytes know when to "stop" regenerating when the liver has reached its previous size?

Question 3

As a Licensed Teacher of Anatomy in Glasgow, and with legal responsibilities for cadaveric donation in my laboratory under the Anatomy Act 1984, and the revisions to that in the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006, we as a laboratory deal with whole body donation after death. However, the person who wants to donate has the necessary legal paperwork to be completed (bequest), and needs to be of "sound mind" fully aware of what they are doing, with appropriate recording of this e.g. in their will. Being of appropriate mental capacity has therefore needed, and will also be the case in live donation.

Question 18

One thing here is that there should not be a "market" for being compensated. People who may well be in very difficult financial situations may resort to the most extreme ways to pay off debts, or otherwise. Only necessary expenses should be compensated during life e.g. travel, inconvenience otherwise we would start to have a hierarchical market - is it right for a kidney to be worth more than part of the liver? Regarding the area I work in as a Licensed Teacher of Anatomy where we deal with cadaveric donation we offer to pay for the appropriate funeral expenses for the family. This is only a small token of our thanks for the individual donating their body for medical research and teaching. One thing that came up in the media fairly recently was the suggestion that due to the recession, the family could have their funerals paid for. However, numbers offering to donate have not increased over the years just because of a recession and cash strapped families. Indeed, people can take their names off of the Bequeathal requests. Providing funeral expenses after donation is only respectful to the family and the donor, but not excessive in finances.

Question 22

A difficult one this - and the debate really would be how to prove or disprove the coercion. That would require massive psychological assessment with input from so many specialists that it could prove financially impossible to fully define.

Question 25

If an individual, of sound mental capacity, being fully aware of what they have "signed up to" requests that they want to donate their body to anatomical facilities, or otherwise, why should the family members go against that person's wish throughout life? People have the right to choose what to do with themselves throughout life, and this should continue to the ultimate decision - otherwise another person or persons are controlling an individual for them. If the person is of sound mental capacity - nobody should override their wish!