

# A

## Guiding principles & the fundamental principle of consent



Guide for the general public to Code of Practice A



# Guiding Principles of the Human Tissue Authority

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Our approach to regulation is based on four guiding principles:

- Consent
- Dignity
- Quality
- Honesty and openness

These principles not only inform our work, but also the work of anyone carrying out activities within our remit. For example, anyone storing or using human tissue for the purpose of research.

The guidance below sets out how each guiding principle is relevant to you. It explains what you can expect from organisations and individuals working under our remit.

We emphasise the importance of you giving consent for activities using your body or tissue. However, there are situations where you will be unable to give consent. For example, if you have died and your clinician has asked your family to give consent for a post-mortem examination. In this case, if your wishes are not known, then your nominated representative/s or relatives' wishes will be given the same importance.

The term 'relatives' includes a spouse or partner. Where there are no relatives, this includes close friends of a deceased person. Decisions regarding consent should be made according to the hierarchy of qualifying relationships.

## Consent

Your wishes are paramount to the removal, storage and use of your tissue.

This means:

- your body, tissues and organs will only be used in accordance with your wishes
- you will be given the information you want and need to be able to make the decision that is right for you
- anyone asking for your consent will do so with sensitivity and with an appreciation for your particular circumstances

## Dignity

Your dignity, and the dignity of your relatives, should be respected at all times.

This means:

- you have a right to privacy
- all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your body, organs and tissues from harm
- if your tissues need to be disposed of, this will be done:
  - sensitively;
  - in a way that is appropriate to the type of tissue;
  - and in line with the wishes you have expressed in your lifetime
- organisations which import human bodies and material of human origin should assure themselves of the integrity of the material and that, as a minimum, it has been sourced with appropriate consent.

## **Quality**

You can expect services to meet certain standards and to be cared for in a way that meets your needs.

This means:

- everyone working with your tissue/s or body will have the appropriate skills and training to provide high quality services
- everyone working with your tissue/s or body will follow good practice and professional guidance
- the site/s where your body and/or tissue/s are used or stored will be clean, secure and well-maintained. This includes all equipment on site
- your records and information will be accurate and kept in a way that means your body and tissue/s can be traced at all times
- your information will be held securely and confidentially

## **Honesty and openness**

You can expect everyone using your tissues or body to be honest and open.

This means:

- your conversations with everyone using and/or storing your tissue/s and body will be open, honest, clear and objective
- organisations will investigate fully all serious incidents to prevent similar incidents in future
- organisations will be open and transparent when responding to serious incidents
- any conversations you have about medical testing or treatment will be kept separate to conversations about donating your tissue/s or body

- organisations will give you clear and honest information about how they charge and are reimbursed

If you have any concerns about the services you've received, please contact the HTA on either 020 7269 1900 or by email: [enquiries@hta.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@hta.gov.uk).