Donating your brain

Diseases of the brain are increasingly common in the UK due to an ageing population suffering from conditions such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease. There are no known cures for many of these diseases, so high priority is given to research seeking to understand them better – potentially leading to new treatments.

Scientists study human tissue to improve their understanding of how diseases start and progress, and what keeps us healthy. Research such as this often leads to different ways of diagnosing disease and can help develop new treatments.

To ensure research is thorough, it is also extremely important to have access to brain tissue from deceased people who did not have the diseases. This is known as control tissue and it is crucial that scientists have access to this so that they can compare it directly with tissue from a person with a disease. These valuable donations are essential for developing new and better treatments for people with diseases and in the search for a cure.

Brain donation has helped with the discovery and treatment of diseases such as schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

The role of the HTA in brain donation

The HTA licenses organisations that store human tissue, including brains, for research. We believe that good regulation supports good science, which in turn improves healthcare. The HTA ensures that tissue is removed and stored in an appropriate and well-managed way. Our regulation ensures that the public and researchers can have confidence that the wishes of individual patients and their families are respected. Medical research needs the best quality tissue to work on, and the HTA’s regulation helps ensure it is stored to high standards.

Please note that there is not an out-of-hours telephone service for brain donation enquiries. Please leave a message on our answer machine.

How to donate your brain for research

The following human tissue banks accept brain and spinal tissue for research. As well as needing particular types of tissue from people with the conditions named below, they also accept donations of brain and spinal tissue from people without these conditions as controls to the research.

Contact details for brain banks

Brains for Dementia Research (BDR)
Brains for Dementia Research Co-ordinating Centre
Wolfson Centre for Age Related Diseases
King’s College London
St Thomas’ Street
London SE1 1UL

Contact: Dr Gillian Hayes
T 020 7848 8377 (Includes out-of-hours contact / message facilities)
F 020 7848 6515
E bdr.office@kcl.ac.uk
W http://www.brainsfordementiaresearch.org.uk/
Cambridge Brain Bank
Cambridge Brain Bank
Department Histopathology
Level 5 Box 235
Addenbrooke's Hospital
Hills Road
Cambridge CB2 0QQ

Contact: Beverley Haynes / Jenny Wilson
T 01223 217336
E brbank@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cardiff*
Dept of Neuropathology
University of Wales
College of Medicine
Heath Park
Cardiff
CF14 4XN

Contact: Dr GA Lammie
T 02920 742018
F 02920 742701
E lammiega@cf.ac.uk

* The Department of Neuropathology coordinates brain donation in Wales. If you would like to make a brain donation for medical research please use the contact details above.

London Neurodegenerative Diseases Brain Bank
Institute of Psychiatry
Box PO65
King's College London
De Crespigny Park
London SE5 8AF

Contact: Dr Claire Troakes
T 020 7848 0290 (Office hours)
F 020 7848 0275
E brain.bank@kcl.ac.uk
W http://www.iop.kcl.ac.uk/brainbank

Manchester Brain Bank
Cerebral Function Unit
Greater Manchester Neuroscience Centre
Hope Hospital
Stott Lane
Salford
M6 8HD

Contact: Stephen Chew-Graham
T 0161 789 7373 (ext 2561)
E brainbank@manchester.ac.uk
Newcastle Brain Bank
Newcastle Brain Tissue Resource
Institute for Ageing and Health
Newcastle University
Campus for Ageing and Vitality
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 5PL

Contact: Debbie Lett
T: 01912 481231
E: nbtr@ncl.ac.uk

Northern Ireland Regional Neuropathology Service
Regional Neuropathology Service
The Royal Victoria Hospital
Grosvenor Road
Belfast BT12 6BA

Contact: Dr M Mirakhur
T: 028 9063 2319
E: meenakshi.mirakhur@bll-i.nhs.uk

Queen Square Brain Bank for Neurological Disorders
UCL Institute of Neurology
Institute of Neurology
1 Wakefield Street
London WC1N 3BG

Contact: Susan Stoneham
T: 020 7837 8370
F: 020 7278 4993
E: s.stoneham@ion.ucl.ac.uk

South West Dementia Brain Bank (SWDBB)
University of Bristol
Level 1, Learning & Research
Southmead Hospital
Bristol, BS10 5NB

Contact: Laura Palmer
T: 0117 4147821
F: 0117 4147822
E: laura.e.palmer@bristol.ac.uk

Thomas Willis Oxford Brain Collection
Neuropathology Dept
Level 1, West Wing
John Radcliffe Hospital
Headley Way, Headington
Oxford OX3 9DU

Contact: Professor Margaret Esiri
T: 01865 234904 / 01865 234403 (Includes out-of-hours message service)
F: 01865 231157
E: margaret.esiri@clneuro.ox.ac.uk
Multiple Sclerosis Society Tissue Bank
Wolfson Neuroscience Laboratories
Imperial College Faculty of Medicine
Hammersmith Hospital Campus
Burlington Danes Building
160 Du Cane Road
London W12 0NN

Contact: Dr George Gveric
T 020 7594 9734
F 020 7594 9735
E ukmstissuebank@imperial.ac.uk

UK Parkinson’s Disease Society Tissue Bank
Wolfson Neuroscience Laboratories
Imperial College Faculty of Medicine
Hammersmith Hospital Campus
Burlington Danes Building
160 Du Cane Road
London W12 0NN

Contact: Dr George Gveric
T 020 7594 9732
F 020 7594 9733
E pdbank@imperial.ac.uk