

# news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school - graduate school of biomedical sciences - school of allied health sciences

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*\*\*\*\*\*Medical schools may need more  
bodies in future.*

DALLAS--The expansion of The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School's training programs to double its production of doctors may begin to tax its supply of human bodies for anatomical study during the next few years.

While there is no current shortage, accelerated usage by students may become a problem if the level of donations to Southwestern's Willed Body Program remains the same, according to Dr. William B. Neaves, associate professor of Cell Biology and director of Anatomy at the school.

Some of the five other medical schools in Texas may experience similar problems, also, he added. Projections currently are being made by Dr. Grover Ericson, supervisor of the Willed Body Program.

Southwestern now accepts 200 freshmen per year and these students take the traditional course in Human Anatomy from about the first of November to the middle of February. One body is assigned every four students who form two teams. One student from each team performs dissection while his teammate coaches and follows the process in a text manual like "Grant's Dissector."

During recent years, as many as six students were assigned one body but educators believe this is too many: four now being considered the national standard.

This means that each new freshman class at Southwestern needs a minimum of 50 bodies to study. Postgraduate studies by medical scientists require additional bodies, also.

More than 4,000 names are on file with the Willed Body Program at Southwestern Medical School. The people represented have filled out the necessary forms and have received billfold cards expressing their wishes.

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With the appearance of increasingly more sophisticated plastic and rubber models of skeletons, lungs and other organs, why do medical schools retain the classic practice of anatomical dissection?

"The history of anatomy in relation to medicine shows over and over again when dissection is sacrificed, training suffers tremendously," declares Dr. Neaves. "The best a model can do is supplement an actual dissection. Even a plastic skeleton--and there are companies which make them from actual casts of bones--is only adequate for superficial study."

For instance, Dr. Neaves said, the tiny bony tunnel which accomodates the facial nerve in the ear region is so small and delicate, it would be practically impossible to duplicate it in a plastic model.

"Also," continued Dr. Neaves, "the students begin to get a feel for the natural variation in people which models can't provide."

Many myths abound about donation of bodies.

The principal myth is that someone will pay for bodies. This is actually illegal. (Southwestern Medical School does bear expense of preparation and transportation of the body within 50 miles of Dallas. Beyond that, the donor's estate is asked to bear the cost.) Brochures about the Willed Body Program are available on request. The Anatomy faculty strongly emphasize a professional attitude in the students.

At the beginning of the Human Anatomy section, students are told: "Dissection of the human body during your professional training is a great privilege made possible by the generous donors of our Willed Body Program. These donors have given their bodies to the training of future physicians with the full expectation that each of you would preserve their personal dignity and privacy and would protect the emotions of their living relatives.

"In effect, their expectations require that the sanctity of the relationship between physician and patient be extended to include the relationship between medical student and cadaver."

After students complete their studies, remains are cremated. Families of the donor are able to make arrangements in advance to receive the ashes.

Inquiries about the program may be made to the Director of Anatomy, Southwestern Medical School, 5323 Harry Hines Blvd., Dallas, 75235.