

# The bank that gives hope

Staff of the MS Tissue Bank



Dr George Gveric, UK MS Tissue Bank

The UK Multiple Sclerosis Tissue Bank was set up in 1998 with two clear aims - to fulfil wishes of all those who wanted to help MS research by donating brain and spinal cord tissue, and to provide a resource for scientists investigating various aspects of MS. So far 490 individuals have donated their brain and spinal cord and more than 4,000 people with and without MS have pledged their tissue for MS research. We have supported more than 120 research groups whose experimental work has changed the way we look and think about MS and opened new avenues for treatment.

## The role of the Tissue Bank

A need for a tissue bank in the UK was recognised some 30 years ago. The impetus for collection, accurate cataloguing and storage of MS tissue arose from pathological evidence of significant variations from brain to brain. An increasing number of research groups in the UK requiring human MS samples for their studies led to the recognition of a need for a dedicated tissue source to supply the wider research community.

The Tissue Bank now makes high quality tissue available to research groups who are investigating a variety of problems associated with MS. Enabling more people - from both academia and pharmaceutical industry - to do this work means that our likelihood of finding the cause of MS is greatly increased.

## What happens after you donate

We aim to collect donated tissue within 24 hours of death, when tissue is most useful for research. However, donated organs are valuable no matter the length of time taken to collect the tissue and can still be used for a number of important scientific studies.

We usually organise tissue retrieval at the hospital mortuary nearest to the place of death. Transport costs between mortuary and the funeral directors are covered by the Tissue Bank. Every donation yields approximately 250 samples from which our neuropathologists generate a detailed report. This

is sent to the deceased's GP who can discuss it with relatives if they so wish.

It is vital that you let your next-of-kin or legal representative, your GP and any other relevant people know of your intention to donate. The more people who know, the better the chance that it will not be forgotten at the critical moment. Tissue Bank co-ordinators are on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year, to arrange tissue retrieval or to answer urgent questions from donors.

## Donating tissue is a lasting legacy

We understand that becoming a donor is not an easy choice to make. We produce a donor pack that contains all the relevant information and forms, and our co-ordinators are happy to answer the questions you may have to help you make an informed decision. Brain and spinal cord tissue are not transplantable, so being a donor does not clash with your membership of any other organ donor scheme.

Once you decide to become a donor we send you a donor card with your name and an emergency phone number to contact the Tissue Bank. We will also send you *The Bank Statement*, our annual newsletter, to keep you informed on the progress of the Bank and developments in research projects using donated tissue.

Donating tissue for research is a lasting legacy. A better understanding of the causes and treatment of human diseases, including MS, is only going to come from studies performed on human tissue made available through the generosity of people who have agreed to donate their organs.

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