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Policy Area Infection Prevention
Applicability UNC Medical Center

Custody of Internal Body Tissue, Organs, or Body Parts

I. Rationale

Patients occasionally request that they take custody of body tissue, organs, or body parts that have been removed during a medical procedure (e.g., placenta, fetal remains [less than completion of second trimester], appendix, or amputated limbs). In compliance with North Carolina law, UNC Hospitals cannot allow patients to take custody of any such body tissue, organ, or body parts. The exception being of kidney stones, gall bladder stones, teeth, or placenta within certain criteria listed in Attachment 1 - UNC Hospitals Labor and Delivery: Instructions for Releasing the Placenta). Any body tissue, organ, or body part other than those explicitly excepted within this policy must be delivered to a licensed funeral home, cremated, or incinerated, as set forth below. Human bodies, including a fetus developed beyond completion of the second trimester of gestation, are addressed in the Patient Care policies: [Death - Post Mortem Care](#) and [Transportation of Bodies by Family or Loved Ones](#).

II. Policy

A. Definitions

North Carolina Solid Waste Management Regulation 15A N.C.A.C. § 13B.1201 provides the following definitions:

- "Microbiological Waste" means cultures and stocks of etiologic agents. The term includes cultures of specimens from medical, pathological, pharmaceutical, research, commercial, and industrial laboratories.
- "Pathological Waste" includes human tissues, organs, and body parts.
- "Regulated Medical Waste" means blood and body fluids in individual containers in volumes greater than 20 ml, Microbiological Waste, and Pathological Waste that have

not been treated pursuant to 15A N.C.A.C. § 13B.1204.

B. Procedure

1. Disposal Requirements

- a. Blood and body fluids in individual containers in volumes less than 20 mL must be disposed of pursuant to the Infection Prevention policy: [Guidelines for Disposal of Regulated Medical Waste](#).
- b. All Regulated Medical Waste, as defined above, must be treated and disposed of in accordance with the North Carolina Solid Waste Management regulations, the terms of which are included in the Infection Prevention policy: [Guidelines for Disposal of Regulated Medical Waste](#).
- c. Because all human tissues, organs and body parts are considered "Pathological Waste", and thus "Regulated Medical Waste" under North Carolina law, no human tissues, organs, or body parts removed during a medical procedure at UNC Hospitals (e.g., appendix, amputated limb, etc.) may be released to a patient (with the exception of kidney stones, gall bladder stones, teeth, or placenta within criteria listed in Attachment 1 - UNC Hospitals Labor and Delivery: Instructions for Releasing the Placenta, and teeth). All tissues, organs, or body parts should be handled using appropriate PPE.

2. Release of Human Tissue, Organs, or Body Parts

- a. For religious or other reasons, a patient may request that UNC Hospitals deliver certain tissues, organs, or body parts removed during a medical procedure at UNC Hospitals, including recognizable body parts (e.g., leg, arm, hand), and body tissues required for diagnostic procedures, to a licensed funeral home to bury or to store in accordance with the applicable North Carolina regulations for burial separately or with the patient at the time of the patient's death. Similarly, a patient may request that UNC Hospitals deliver fetal remains to a licensed funeral home for burial or cremation. The patient or authorized representative (see Patient Care policy: [Authorized Representatives of Patients](#)) is responsible for making arrangements with the funeral home. The patient or authorized representative will be required to sign a release allowing the transfer of the tissue/body part to a licensed funeral home/mortuary on a UNC Hospitals approved form. For transportation of fetal remains to a funeral home by someone other than the funeral home, consult Patient Care policy: [Transportation of Bodies by Family or Loved Ones](#). Except as stated in paragraph (b), below, other tissues, organs, or body parts must be disposed of in accordance with the Infection Prevention policy: [Guidelines for Disposal of Regulated Medical Waste](#).

- b. Under North Carolina Solid Waste Management regulations, patients are not allowed to obtain custody of tissues, organs, or body parts for display (with the exception of placentas within criteria listed in Attachment 1 - UNC Hospitals Labor and Delivery: Instructions for Releasing the placenta, kidney stones, gall bladder stones, and teeth). Other than the limited exceptions explicitly identified in this policy, UNC Hospitals may only dispose of tissues, organs, or body parts (including fetal remains developed less than the completion of the second trimester) by delivery to a licensed funeral home, or by incineration, or cremation, as set forth in the Infection Prevention policy: [Guidelines for Disposal of Regulated Medical Waste](#). Deceased bodies, including fetal remains if the fetus has developed beyond the completion of the second trimester of gestation, must be delivered to a licensed funeral home, or sent for cremation, or, in some circumstances, may be transported directly by a family member (see Patient Care policy: [Transportation of Bodies By Family or Loved Ones](#)).

III. Related Policies

[Infection Prevention Policy: Guidelines for Disposal of Regulated Medical Waste](#)

[Patient Care Policy: Authorized Representatives of Patients](#)

[Patient Care Policy: Death - Post Mortem Care](#)

[Patient Care Policy: Transportation of Bodies by Family or Loved Ones](#)

Attachments

[Attachment 1 - UNC Hospitals Labor and Delivery: Instructions for Releasing the Placenta](#)

[Attachment 2 - Acknowledgement and Authorization for Release of Placenta Form](#)

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Kimberly Novak-Jones: Nurse Educator	04/2024
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Applicability

UNC Medical Center

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