

**LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR**



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“Acknowledging Our Donors”

Dear Colleagues,

The majority of papers published in The Journal of Plastination describe studies using human or animal specimens. The studies on human anatomical specimens are based on material from cadavers that have been donated through willed body programs. In the UK (except Scotland, which has its own legislation), whole-body donations, and human dissections, are controlled by the Human Tissue Act (2004), and similar legislation is in place in most other countries. The Human Tissue Act permits, with consent, storage of whole bodies and carrying out ‘anatomical examination’ (i.e. dissections) for the purposes of “teaching or studying, or researching into, the gross structure of the human body” (Human Tissue Authority, 2015).

Many, but by no means all, authors include an acknowledgement that their study would not have been possible without the generosity of the body donors. A newly-published paper in ‘Clinical Anatomy’, “Acknowledging the Use of Human Cadaveric Tissues in Research Papers: Recommendations from Anatomical Journal Editors” jointly written by the Editors-in-Chief of sixteen international anatomical journals (including The Journal of Plastination), drawn from fourteen countries around the world, addresses this issue (Iwanaga et al., 2020).

The authors of this paper note that “[w]ithout the goodwill of these donors who allow us to use their bodies to push forward our anatomical knowledge, most human anatomical research would come to a standstill... many research papers omit an acknowledgement to the donor cadavers or, as no current standardized versions exist, use language that is extremely varied”.

Iwanaga et al. (2020) suggest that religious diversity, and different approaches to medical ethics and views of life and death may have contributed to the lack of any standardized form of acknowledgement. The authors hope that their recommendations will add to the respect that cadaveric studies give to the donors, and might also help to give such studies a positive image in the public at large, from whom, of course, our donors are drawn.

It was agreed by the collected Editors-in-Chief that:

1. The recommendation is applied to any research using donor cadavers or cadaveric tissues in a study.
2. An ‘Acknowledgments’ section should follow the Conclusion section of papers.
3. Within the ‘Acknowledgments’ section, gratitude to the donor cadavers and their families should be expressed.

4. An appropriate and agreed-upon donor cadaver acknowledgment is:

“The authors sincerely thank those who donated their bodies to science so that anatomical research could be performed. Results from such research can potentially increase mankind’s overall knowledge that can then improve patient care. Therefore, these donors and their families deserve our highest gratitude” (Iwanaga et al., 2020).

The ‘Instructions for Authors’ in The Journal of Plastination have been amended to reflect these recommendations; all manuscripts intended for publication in the Journal, that are based on studies using human cadaveric material, will now be expected to acknowledge the donors. Without them, such studies would not be possible, and we should not forget that fact.

Best wishes,



Philip J Addis

Editor-in-Chief

References

Human Tissue Authority 2015: Acceptance of donor consent for anatomical examination. <https://www.hta.gov.uk/policies/acceptance-donor-consent-anatomical-examination> [accessed July 2020].

Iwanaga Joe, Singh V, Ohtsuka A, Hwang Y, Kim H-J, Morys J, Addis PJ et al. 2020: Acknowledging the use of human cadaveric tissues in research papers: recommendations from anatomical journal editors. Clin Anat 10.1002/ca.23671.