



Return Of Body Parts Procedure

Procedure Number
WCDHB-PG-0009

Version Nos:
3

1. Purpose

This Procedure is performed as a means of ensuring that all patients are aware of the process for the return on body parts after removal during surgery, and that a process is also available when such parts are returned to the patient and/or their family/whanua.

2. Application

This Procedure is to be followed by all clinical staff throughout the West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB).

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure.

Body Parts is taken to mean placenta, any limbs/parts of limbs, organs, parts of organs removed during surgery, and foetal remains.

4. Responsibilities

For the purposes of this Procedure:

Clinical staff are to discuss with the patient and their family/whanau the option of body part return, and undertake to ensure that the wishes of the patient and their family/whanau are complied with.

5. Resources Required

This Procedure requires:

- i) Container appropriate for the storage of the body part
- ii) Patient's clinical record

6. Process

- 1.00 Patient and their family/whanau can discuss with clinical staff discuss the option of body part return, either at a pre-assessment clinic, after admission or prior to surgery.
- 1.01 Where a patient wishes to have a body part returned, this is to be clearly recorded in the patient's medical record.
- 1.02 When the patient arrives at Theatre, the Team Leader is to ensure that all Theatre staff are advised of the patient's request.
- 1.03 On removal, the body part is to be placed into an appropriate container and identified with the patient's Bradmar label.
- 1.04 If the body part is required to be sent to the Laboratory for testing purposes, it is to be notified on the WCDHB Laboratory Test Request Form that the body part is required to be returned to the patient.



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- 1.05 The body part is then transferred to either the Laboratory or Mortuary.
- 1.06 The Laboratory or Mortuary document receipt of the body part using the patient's NHI number.
- 1.07 The body part is stored in an appropriate part of the Mortuary or Laboratory.
- 1.08 If the body part is a limb discussions are to be held with the patient and/or their family/whanau to determine if they wish to have the limb embalmed. If they wish this to occur, then the local undertaker is contacted and arrangements made for the limb to be embalmed
- 1.09 For post-mortems, the Pathologist is to be made aware that the body part is for return to the family/whanau of the patient.
- 1.10 Discussion is to be undertaken with the patient and/or family/whanau at an appropriate time to arrange for the return of the body part. For Maori patients the assistance of the Kai Arahi is to be obtained.
- 1.11 The body part is to be placed into an appropriate container and returned to the patient and/or family/whanau in a discrete and culturally appropriate manner.

7. Precautions And Considerations

- ➔ Patient and their family/whanau can discuss with clinical staff discuss the option of body part return
- ➔ On removal, the body part is to be placed into an appropriate container and identified with the patient's Bradmar label.
- ➔ The body part is to be placed into an appropriate container and returned to the patient and/or family/whanau in a discrete and culturally appropriate manner.

8. References

Nelson-Marlborough Health Services Return of Body Parts Procedure
Healthcare Otago Policy for the Return Of Body Parts To A Patient
Code of Health and Disability Service Consumers' Rights
Human Rights Act (1993)
Human Tissue Act (1964)
Hauora O Te Tinana Me Ona Tikanga (Ministry Of Maori Development)

9. Related Documents

WCDHB Informed Consent Procedure



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10. Guidelines

The return of body parts to a patient and their family/whanau is seen as valuing a tradition and honouring a cultural practice. Maori believe that when parts of the body are severed and left in another place the body will take a long time to heal and function properly again. However, if the severed parts are collected and placed in a safe place by the person or their family/whanau then there is a feeling of assurance that the body parts are being cared for and the rest of the body feels at peace because of the body part has not been burnt, buried in an unknown place or mutilated in any way.

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