

**U B H T**  
TEACHING CARE

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 Direct

Our ref PJB/RLAT

Your ref

August 6, 1992

Mr J Dhasmana  
 Consultant Cardiac Surgeon  
 Dept of Cardiac Surgery  
 Bristol Royal Infirmary

Dear *J Dhasmana*

Retention of postmortem tissue

I know that we have discussed this issue before, but increasing pressure from the Coroner's office and the Department of Health as well as the Royal College of Pathologists means that we must put our house in order.

When we last discussed this matter it was left that you would ask your patient's permission for us to retain cardiac tissue from Coroner's postmortems. You will recall that the pathologist is only allowed to retain tissue for the purposes of establishing the cause of death, and that for the Coroner's purposes the cause of death can be general.

There is no difficulty with hospital postmortem examinations because the Children's Hospital consent form includes permission to take samples of tissue for teaching and research.

In future we will not be able to retain the heart unless there is a signed statement in the notes from one of the doctors looking after the child that they have satisfied themselves that the parents of the child do not object to the retention of tissue during the course of the Coroner's postmortem examination. In explaining this to parents it may be helpful for you to emphasise that part of the heart will always be returned to the body, and only that part involved in the malformation or surgery will be retained.

I am sorry for any problems this will cause, but this is not an issue that will go away.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

*P J Berry*  
 PROFESSOR P J BERRY  
 Professor of Paediatric Pathology

The United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust

