

Lydia Reid submission of 17 November 2022

PE1911/EE: Review of Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 as it relates to post-mortems

We write to support Petition PE1911 Currently before the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee.

This petition should not be.

It should not have to be.

Between 1999 and 2006 when the new law was set down so many agreements were made, so many promises were made, a whole new law. We were so sure we had made a difference. We were told we had made a difference.

What we have now I shiver when I hear these new stories. Parents/relatives being told that it is acceptable for Blocks and slides (which are actually parts of a loved one's body) taken or given at will to suit a pathologist or researcher with no authorisation. I actually read the same expression from 1999 in a submission to the petitions committee. The review group highlighted this issue and condemned it then and said this should never happen again.

“We do not tell relatives because we might upset them”

Pathologists gave that same excuse when they took our children's organs and bodies and body parts in the past and lied. They said they did not until we proved them wrong.

Research is vital but cannot be put above the rights of a next of kin to choose whether that is to happen to the bodies of their loved one. Why is it we have not yet learned the lesson that education and helping people to understand the importance of the free giving for research will do more good and will gain more?

Bodies **are** still being mutilated when the rest of the world uses a scanner to do a postmortem.

We do not even have to buy these scanners we can lease them. The Procurator Fiscal must still have the right to prove the cause of death we all know that but how many actual cases is that in a year?

Very few.

How many murder cases or unlawful deaths do we have in Scotland in a year?

Not that many.

We also have a responsibility to relatives of the dead. I know from experience in the past and currently that the mental health issues caused by the raiding of bodies and the refusal to involve relatives is absolutely awful.

This cannot go on.

Permanent changes must happen. We need openness with relatives. We need staff well enough trained to discuss the subject openly. This may well be beneficial to research. Relatives may well donate Blocks and Slides.

What must be changed is the following:

1. Most postmortems should be done using a scanner (That does not affect the right of the Procurator Fiscal to go further if they are unsure of the cause of death)
2. If Blocks and slides are needed they can be removed by keyhole surgery which avoids a body being mutilated. Removing throats tongues and brains are not necessary. Use a camera. Use a flashlight. Use a scanner.
3. Scotland should be offering blocks and slides back to relatives If they are kept informed and given choices relatives can choose
 - a. To hold up the funeral
 - b. To give for research
 - c. Bury or cremate at their own cost or add to the ashes casket
 - d. No longer can pathologists take or keep any body part without the authorisation of a relative unless it is a Procurator

Fiscal postmortem and only then until the cause of death is known.

The cost to mental health when a relative starts to find out what has happened to the body of a loved one when they have been told nothing is drastic. What all forget is that body on the slab or in the freezer or the parts stored in a box are part of a person.

A real person who is loved missed and who has loved ones who care about all they have left of that person.

I cannot believe at my age I am back writing these letters to Petitions committees. To Government. To MSPs.

Please help us make these changes permanent.