

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF AN AUTOPSY

The European Federation for Experimental Morphology (EFEM), the “umbrella” organisation that includes Anatomical Societies throughout Europe, applauds Professor Dr. Günter von Hagens sentiment concerning the need to disseminate widely anatomical knowledge to the general public.

However, the EFEM cannot accept that an anatomical examination presented as a dissection performed in front of a large audience is capable of attaining that goal for the following reasons:

1. The human body does not consist only of isolated organs that can be demonstrated like isolated car parts. Indeed, the body’s intimate topographical relationships must be appreciated through personal exploration and scientifically-directed dissection;
2. Anatomy must be learned through the application of several parallel methods, among which dissection is very important, but it cannot be separated from such other medical imaging techniques as radiology, ultrasonic imaging, MR iconography, endoscopy, etc.

Moreover, the EFEM is aware of the strong moral and legal responsibilities which underpin anatomical dissection. It is the duty of academics associated with medicine to protect human dignity and to respect the rights and privacy of patients. Such rights do not end at their death.

Therefore, the EFEM requests from European Regional, National and International Authorities that they strictly control the application of the Laws and Regulations governing donation, death certification, transport, dissection and disposal of human cadavers used for anatomical analysis or *post mortem* examination. Furthermore, special attention must be given to the informed consent of the persons wishing to donate their bodies. In particular, it is necessary to ensure that proper procedures are undertaken, and that anatomical dissections and *post mortem* examinations are only undertaken privately to maintain subject confidentiality.

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