Neurology nurses are in a unique position to advance the science of brain disease by making families aware of a powerful gift they can make. For those who have supported a loved one through a neurological disease, and for those who’ve suffered first-hand the devastating impact of brain disease, brain donation upon death is a meaningful way to support science. There is currently an urgent need for brain donation for the study of a variety of neurological disorders and making arrangements in advance is the best way to make it happen. Breakthroughs in neuroscience require this precious resource, for which there simply is no substitute.

The Brain Donor Project is an innovative not-for-profit that was developed to support the NeuroBioBank (NBB) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in making available high quality, well characterized brain tissue for neurologic researchers. The focus is on raising awareness of the critical need for this precious tissue and on simplifying the process of brain donation upon death. The NBB is the country's only federated network of brain banks that:

- Supports academia and industry
- Distributes tissue based on the merits of the study itself – nothing else.
- Accepts and encourages donation of control brains as well as diseased ones
- Requires transparency and specific publication of results so that scientists can build on each other’s work
- Advances science by efficiently handling the requests of neurologic investigators

Put simply, more has been learned about the human brain in the last 20 years than in all of recorded history, but there is so much yet to discover. In fact three Institute Directors at the NIH recently authored this letter (https://www.ninds.nih.gov/News-Events/Directors-Messages/All-Directors-Messages/NIH-NeuroBioBank-Addressing-Urgent-Need-Brain) to encourage brain donation and share some recent results of study utilizing donated CNS tissue. The reason is that many people – including medical professionals - may not be aware that...

- Signing up to an organ donor does **not** mean the brain is included. Separate arrangements need to be made for brain donation.
- Donating the body for anatomical study does **not** mean the brain will be used for neurological research. Again, separate arrangements are needed.
- People who have not been diagnosed with a neurological disorder can help, too. Control brains are just as valuable.
- Brain donation is not disfiguring – an open casket is still an option.
- There’s no additional cost to the family for brain donation.
Starting the process is easy – go to braindonorproject.org to get answers to questions about brain donation. When ready to sign up, click on the “Sign Up” button at the top right, and complete the online form. The form contains mainly contact information and whether a neurologic diagnosis has been made. Medical records will later be used to verify.

Once the form is submitted, the potential donor will hear from one of the brain banks in the NeuroBioBank of the NIH within ten business days. Consent and release forms will then be delivered, along with instructions for the family or whoever will be tasked with carrying out wishes upon death. When that time comes, the body will be transported to a medical or mortuary location (at no cost to your family) for the brain to be retrieved and shipped. Time is of the essence at this point, so making arrangements to register in advance helps ensure that all of these arrangements can be accomplished as quickly as possible and the body is then released for whatever funeral arrangements will take place.

Please visit braindonorproject.org for more information on this valuable way to advance the science of neurological disease.