

## IMPACT OF LAST WISH PROGRAM RESEARCH

Please feel free to ask us about our on-going projects. Tissue donations have led to major findings from MSK researchers. Two examples are provided below.

One study showed that there is a long window of opportunity for early detection of pancreatic cancer. This was an important finding because pancreatic cancer was long thought to grow too fast for screening to be effective. (Yachida S, et al. Distant Metastasis Occurs Late during the Genetic Evolution of Pancreatic Cancer. Nature. 2010;467(7319):1114-1117.)

Another study showed why and how some breast cancers develop resistance to therapy. It was also featured on MSK's blog: [www.mskcc.org/blog/study-reveals-how-somebreast-become-resistant-targeted-drugs](http://www.mskcc.org/blog/study-reveals-how-somebreast-become-resistant-targeted-drugs). (Juric D et al.. Convergent Loss of PTEN Leads to Clinical Resistance to a PI(3)Ka inhibitor. Nature. 2014;518(7538): 240-244.)

## WHOM MAY I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

T 646.888.3253

@ [pthLastWish@mskcc.org](mailto:pthLastWish@mskcc.org)



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## LAST WISH PROGRAM

Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

Empowering patients at the end  
of their lives to support cutting  
edge research



# Q&A

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE LAST WISH PROGRAM (LWP)

### Who can participate in the LWP?

MSK patients with a cancer history who are expected to pass away in NY, NJ, CT, PA or DE, within a 3-hour drive from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, are eligible. The LWP is not able to accept patients with certain serious infectious diseases.

### How and when do patients join the LWP?

Interested patients should contact the LWP (646.888.3253 or pthLastWish@mskcc.org) or discuss the LWP with their MSK physician while they are still able to make their own decisions and complete forms. Parents and Legal Authorized Representatives may provide consent on behalf of pediatric patients and cognitively-impaired patients, respectively. The LWP must have the signed consent forms before we can work with the patient's funeral home to arrange transport to and from MSK (if needed). On occasion, we may be unable to confirm transport and will not be able to collect tissues from that patient.

### When does tissue collection happen?

The LWP collects tissues after the patient passes away. Collection is usually performed the first business day after passing (or sooner, if feasible). The procedure takes up to a few hours. We may be able to work with participants with stricter timing needs on a case-by-case basis. Patients may donate optional blood samples while they're still living.

### Will the family receive results or reports about the patient's samples?

No, the LWP only performs research with samples and is not certified to provide clinical testing or any pathology reports.

### Is there a charge to participate?

No, all study-related costs are covered by the LWP including any excess costs required to transport the patient to MSK for the procedure. The patient's family or estate remains responsible for the cost of the funeral and all other expenses related to burial.

### Will the donation affect funeral arrangements?

Patients requiring very quick burials (e.g., within 24 hours of death) should discuss their needs with the LWP. In other circumstances, the procedure should not affect funeral services.

### Are there religious or cultural conflicts?

People may worry that tissue donation may conflict with beliefs or traditions. Individuals of a variety of backgrounds have made medical donations. However, end-of-life decisions are always personal. Patients may want to discuss their decision with relatives and religious or spiritual advisors.

### If I consent, can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time by notifying the LWP or your MSK physician.

## LAST WISH PROGRAM (LWP) OVERVIEW

The goal of the LWP is to empower Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) patients to donate their tissues for ongoing cancer research at MSK after they pass away. LWP team members handle all arrangements related to the tissue donation, and collect the cancer and normal tissues in a timely manner that should not interfere with most funeral arrangements. There is no cost to the patient or their family to donate tissues via the LWP.

## LAST WISH PROGRAM RESEARCH

Examples of research questions that the donated tissues can help answer:

- ? Why do some patients' cancers never respond to treatment?
- ? Why do some patients' cancers that initially respond to treatment stop doing so over time?
- ? How do cancer cells spread to other organs in the body?
- ? Why do cancer cells in patients with the same type of cancer spread to different organs in different patients?

The LWP also collaborates with many researchers throughout MSK for studies related to specific tumor types. The information from these studies will help MSK researchers design new drugs and treatments to better treat cancer.

