Cadavers put to use for 3 to 4 years

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Dr Ikshuvanam Swaminathan, 55, and wife, Jayanthi, 48, (both seated) have also pledged their bodies to science. Their 24-year-old doctor son Girider has his concerns but daughter Gayathri, 16, supports the move. -- ST PHOTOS: CAROLINE CHIA

Cadavers at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine are mostly unclaimed bodies assigned by the Health Sciences Authority.

They are used to teach medical, dental, nursing, pharmacy and life sciences undergraduates and postgraduate students.

Both donated bodies and those received from the HSA are embalmed at the school.

They are preserved with formalin, which tends to turn them brownish. The bodies are then stored in chillers.

Bodies can be dissected shortly after by staff from the Department of Anatomy or stored for a period of time and dissected later.

The cadavers are dissected in various ways and angles to show different views of the human body.

In the classroom, students are divided into groups of 15 to 18, with each group working on a cadaver.

They learn about the structures of the human body close-up, such as the position of organs and blood vessels, and which major arteries should not be punctured during medical procedures. They do this once a week, for about
two hours.

After classes, the cadavers are put back in the chillers.

Students at the school are taught to treat the human bodies with respect.

The cadavers are used for three or four years. Afterwards, the remains are cremated and the ashes returned to the families of those who had donated their bodies to science.

Poon Chian Hui

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