

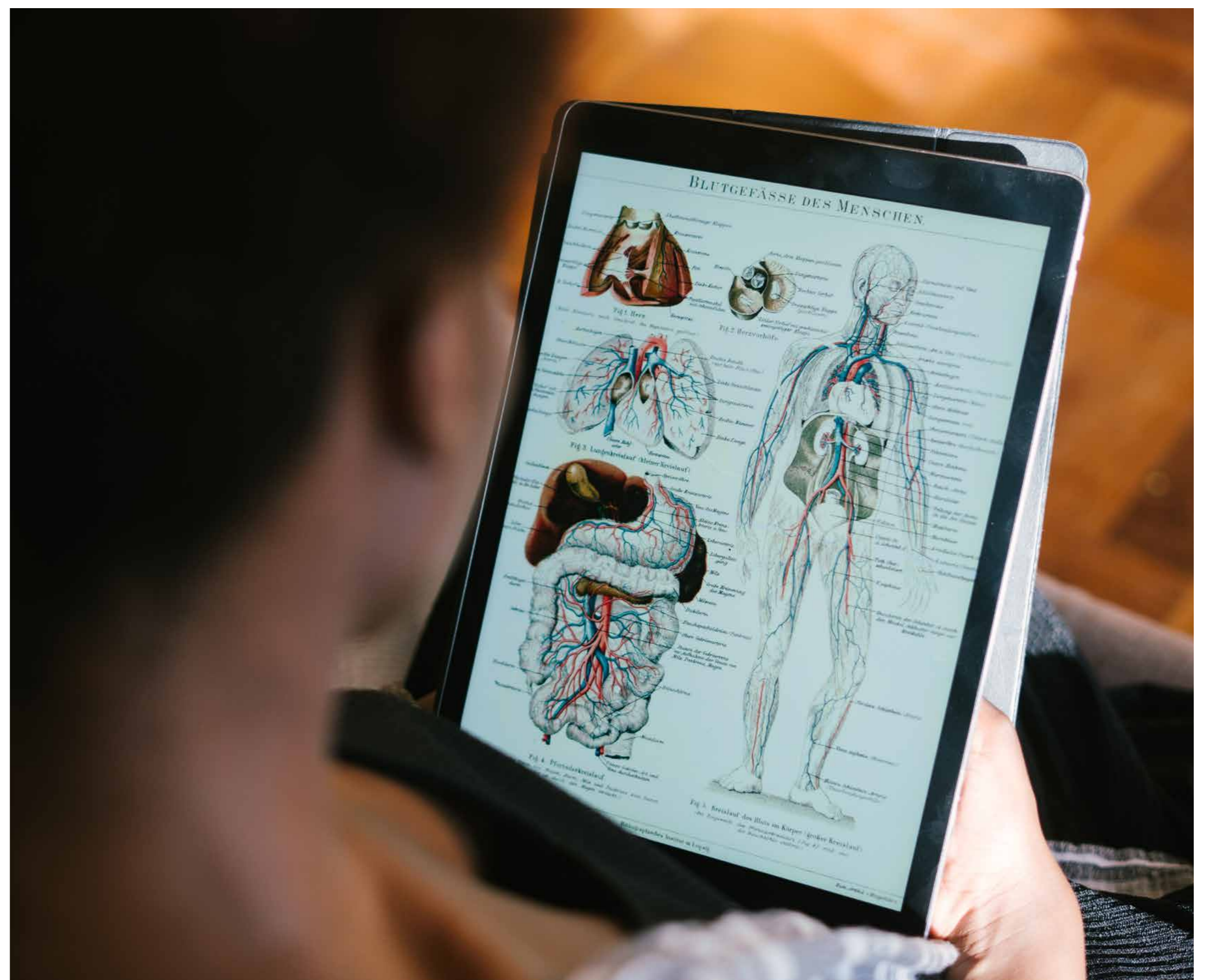
FINDING CULTURALLY ACCEPTABLE WAYS FOR BODY DONATION

Understanding people's cultural practices concerning the treatment of their deceased could help find solutions to the challenge of accessing bodies for medical training.

As part of their training, medical doctors and students receive instruction in human anatomy through lectures and practical dissection sessions. In these practical sessions, they are given the opportunity to dissect deceased human bodies to gain insight into the internal structures. These bodies are obtained through body donations from the public – a process which involves an informed and free decision to donate one's body after death for medical education and research. However, these bodies are in short supply.

There are various reasons why the public may be unwilling to donate their bodies to science. These vary from socio-demographic factors to religious and cultural beliefs. In the African context, culture has been regarded as an influential factor. Research done at UKZN in a primarily Zulu ethnic group of the black African population has shown that age, level of education and cultural beliefs in ancestors contribute to an unwillingness to donate one's body to science.

"Respectful conversations on this sensitive and delicate topic are an essential part of this engagement to produce the required outcomes," says De Gama. "Health



Body donation is critical in the training of future medical professionals.

researchers need to engage other ethnic groups to determine their culturally specific responses regarding the topic of body donation and acceptable ways to treat the dead." This

will enable critical training of future medical doctors in human anatomy in order to provide quality healthcare to the public.



Towards Research Leadership

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