

# WHY SO REAL?

**S**ome medical schools are moving away from the use of cadavers in the clinical anatomy course, relying instead on techniques such as three-dimensional imaging.

“There are some schools right now that are trying to sell their program based on ‘Look, we have it all computerized!’ and on being all New Age-y,” Florida State medical student Katie Powell said. “But the psychological component of it, the emotional component of it – I mean, you’re going to be dealing with death as a doctor. That’s a huge component of being a doctor, so I just think it’s a good baptism by fire to understand that.”

Professor Lynn Romrell believes nothing can replace having a well-educated physician making decisions based on a thorough understanding of the human body.

“We have imaging techniques that get you pictures of organs and other structures like never before, but to truly understand what is going on inside the body, you have to understand the basic structure,” he said. “To use procedures like endoscopy, or to work with available

imaging technology, it all comes back to the physician’s visual image of the body. And there’s no way to replace the visual image you get from dissection by looking through a bunch of pictures from books.”

“You can look at cirrhosis in pictures, but it’s another thing to hold in your hand a real human liver with cirrhosis,” said medical student Souhail Karram. “You can know that somewhere around the belly button you have your gallbladder, but I know exactly where the gallbladder is now.”

The emotional impact of using cadavers is impossible to miss in students who have completed clinical anatomy the old-fashioned way.

“I’ve got a new perspective now on how I will view patients based on the pathology that these people had,” Powell said. “I can only imagine how terrible the last few days, months or years of their life were after seeing some of the things they were living with. It made things more realistic for me. These were real people – somebody’s patient. They could have been my patient.”

COLIN HACKLEY

