



Ontario Tumour Bank: Researcher Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Ontario Tumour Bank?

The Ontario Tumour Bank (OTB) is a provincial biorepository and databank comprised of five (5) member hospitals throughout Ontario (Credit Valley Hospital, Kingston General Hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and The Ottawa Hospital). OTB provides human tissue and peripheral blood to academic and industry-based researchers around the world. OTB is a program of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research which is funded by the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

2. What types of human biospecimens are available from OTB?

Sample Types and Preparation

- Fresh frozen tumour tissue and normal-adjacent tissue (~250 mg/vial);
- Slides, wax sections and paraffin-embedded tissue blocks;
- Cryopreserved plasma (1ml/vial) and buffy coat (~250µl/vial).

OTB does not currently provide cells or cell cultures or pediatric biospecimens.

3. Are tissue microarrays available through OTB?

No.

4. Do you serve academic investigators and commercial entities outside of Ontario?

Yes.

5. What is the request process and how long does it take?

The process is as follows:

- a) Detailed sample search based on your study requirements (1 – 2 days);
- b) Submission of sample request application and a signed Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) (researcher-dependent);
- c) Ethics review by the Ontario Cancer Research Ethics Board (OCREB) – (completed within 5 business days). If there are any questions that arise from the review, they will be returned to the researcher promptly to address for OCREB;
- d) Selection of samples by researcher based on review of online slide images from paraffin blocks (researcher-dependent);
- e) Shipment of de-identified clinical data followed by couriered shipment of samples.

If you are applying for funding for a research project, OTB can provide a non-binding report on availability and/or a Letter of Understanding for inclusion in your submission.

6. How much do samples cost?

The cost of samples and data depends on the type of specimen preparation and the depth of clinical data required. For an estimate, please contact OTB directly.



7. What clinical information comes with the specimen?

The basic level of de-identified clinical information that accompanies the specimen includes: age at time of collection, gender, the surgical pathology diagnosis, histopathology data and staging.

Additional clinical information can be requested about a patient donor given the availability of this data. The basic data set can be supplemented with: patient history, family history, outcome information, systemic therapy, radiotherapy, comprehensive surgical data and toxicity.

8. How are your frozen samples procured?

As part of our standard tissue procurement protocol, samples are flash-frozen within 30 minutes after surgical resection.

9. How long do you fix your samples? What fixative do you use?

Fixed samples are preserved in formalin using routine clinical protocols at each of our member hospitals. When excess tissue is available after we have banked a fresh frozen sample, tissue can be fixed then processed and embedded in paraffin to form cassettes.

10. Do I need to apply to the local Research Ethics Boards (REBs) of your member hospitals for access to OTB samples and data?

No. All requests are evaluated by the Chair of OCREB on behalf of the member hospitals' REBs.

11. Do I need to have my local REB approve my study before I can access OTB samples and data?

No. Prior approval by a local REB for a research study involving human tissues is not a requirement or prerequisite to access OTB samples and data. However, if prior approval has already been issued by your local REB, it is suggested to attach a copy of the approval letter as part of your sample request application.

Researchers intending to use human tissues as part of their studies should consult with their local Research Ethics Board about local approval procedures prior to conducting their studies.

12. How is patient privacy protected?

OTB has technical, administrative and physical safeguards in place to protect PHI. Modern security technologies and controls are used to protect the privacy and integrity of information during transfer, storage and use. Data is encrypted during transmission and stored on secured servers. The Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR) has extensive privacy and security policies in place that limit access and disclosure of data. All PHI is de-identified before it is made accessible to researchers. De-identified PHI is provided to researchers only if their research proposal is approved by the Ontario Cancer Research Ethics Board (OCREB). Researchers who access the samples and data must agree that they will not attempt to re-identify the participant.

13. May I link data I receive from the OTB with other data?

Proposed data linkages must be included in the research plan and approved by OCREB in order to minimize the risk of creating data that could be used to re-identify individuals.



14. What happens if a donor chooses to withdraw from the tumour bank program?

If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study and no longer wants their tissue and data retained by the Ontario Tumour Bank, any remaining tissue and/or blood samples will be returned to the pathology department of the participating hospital, where they will be destroyed along with any paper and electronic data that accompany it. No further information will be collected. Data or samples that have already been distributed to researchers cannot be recalled.