

NCCU CLINICAL GUIDELINES
SECTION: 20

PALLIATIVE CARE, GRIEF AND LOSS

Section 20: Palliative care, grief and loss.
Post mortem examination and coronial notification
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Neonatology Clinical Guidelines
King Edward Memorial/Princess Margaret Hospitals
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POST MORTEM EXAMINATION AND CORONIAL NOTIFICATION

When an infant dies, it is the medical officer's responsibility (*Non-Coronial Post Mortem Examination Code of Practice 2002*) to discuss post mortem with the parents. Hospital post mortem examinations require specific request forms and should be discussed in conjunction with the 'Non-Coronial Post Mortem Examination - Information for Parents' pamphlet.

It is important to give detailed answers to any questions the parents may have. Although this is a very difficult time for parents, a full post mortem can provide significant information which can help them come to terms with their loss. Parents may wish to discuss the option of a full versus limited post mortem examination. Non-Coronial or hospital Post Mortem Examinations can only be conducted with parental consent.

The Post Mortem Coordinator is available to discuss with and advise the parents on all aspects of Non-Coronial post mortem examination and can be contacted on KEMH: x2730 or PMH: x8345. Post mortem examination involving the coroner is required when:

- An infant has died within 24 hours of a surgical operation, death occurred under anaesthesia or within 24 hours of anaesthesia.
- A doctor cannot certify as to the cause of death.
- Death is due to violent or unnatural causes
- There are suspicious circumstances

IN CORONIAL CASES THE FOLLOWING APPLY:

1. All ID bands, equipment and disposable items, i.e. drug ampoules and IV fluid bags should be kept on/with the infant's body until the Coroner's Officer arrives and decides if they are relevant for the Coroner's Inquiry.
2. The coroner needs to be contacted by the medical staff for permission to remove IV lines, gastric tubes, ET tubes etc. The placement of these could be a factor in the infant's death.
3. The Coroner's office will visit the hospital soon after the death is reported. The infant's body is then tagged with the Coronial Officer's identification bracelet.
4. The parents are given an information booklet "Coroner's Office". The Coroner's Office will usually speak to the parents and answer any questions. Parents have 24 hours to appeal to the Coroner if they object to a post mortem being carried out on their infant.
5. The parents are given as much time as possible with their infant. When the parents are ready, the infant's body is transferred to the mortuary. Some infants are required to undergo a post mortem as soon as possible following death as pathological tests need to be carried out promptly. All medical records are given to the Coroner's Office or accompany the infant's body to the mortuary.

[SEE WNHS POLICY W087: CORONIAL MATTERS FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION](#)