**All Doctors’ Induction**

1. **Background**

Changes to Death Certification were brought about by the implementation of The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011. Along with the introduction of new Medical Certificate of Cause of Death Certificates, the Death Certification Review Services (DCRS), part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), was established to undertake medical review of MCCDs issued after the implementation date of 13 May 2015.

One specific change which was introduced was the random selection of the new MCCDs (<10% of all death certificates) for independent review by a Medical Reviewer. This does not including deaths which are reported to the Procurator Fiscal or stillbirths.

The purpose of the medical review of MCCDs is to scrutinise the certificate to promote:

* *Improved recording, accuracy and use of the cause of death information.*
* *Improved public health information, through enhanced data monitoring, analysis and trend identification.*
* *Strengthened clinical governance in relation to deaths, through communication between the new review service and health boards.*

The purpose of the medical review is not to scrutinise the quality or standard of care provided and it is not a case review; it is to assess the quality of the completion of the death certificate.

Since 13 May 2015, all deaths must be registered before burial or cremation can take place.

1. **Communication**

All families registering a death will require to be informed about the possibility of the Death Certificate being selected for review.

To inform staff of the arrangements:

* Leaflets and posters have been circulated to all hospitals and GP Practices
* Training materials are available on the [NES website](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/medicine/about-medical-training/generic-training/support-of-national-training/the-certification-of-death-(scotland)-act-2011-education-and-learning-resources.aspx) and on [LearnPro](https://nhs.learnprouk.com/lms/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2flms%2fuser_level%2fNavigatorHome.aspx)
* A ***Death Certification*** page can be found under ‘well informed’ on the NHS Highland Intranet.

To inform families/informants (those registering the death) two leaflets were produced by Scottish Government. These have been distributed to all hospitals and GP Practices: Both these leaflets are available on the Intranet page.

* The leaflet "Death Certification in Scotland: A Guide to Death Certification and Registration in Scotland" describes the process and requirements.
* The leaflet "Death Certification Review: Advance Registration" describes the circumstances in which families may apply for Advance Registration if they

require the funeral to go ahead within a certain timeframe eg *Religious/cultural reasons; Compassionate reasons; Practical/administrative reasons*

Staff who are supporting recently bereaved families are asked to stress to them the importance of **registering the death promptly**. Registrars will provide guidance to families if the death certificate is selected for review.

1. **The Review Process**

Death Certificates are randomly selected at the point of registration, through the Registrars’ electronic registration system. In Primary Care these are selected electronically via ‘eMCCD’ in SCI Gateway.

Based on approximately 10% of death certificates in NHS Highland being reviewed, it is estimated that this will amount to 20 – 30 death certificates selected for review monthly in Highland.

* 1. ***Level 1 Review (Short Review)***

The Level 1 review should be completed within one day. A Medical Reviewer from DCRS will contact the certifying doctor to discuss the information contained on the certificate. Certifying doctors should ensure that they are contactable or that arrangements are made for an alternative person to be contacted in case the certificate is selected.

* 1. ***Level 2 Reviews (Comprehensive Review)***

A smaller number of Death Certificates are selected for a Level 2 Review. The Level 2 Review will be completed within 3 days. The Medical Reviewer will consider the MCCD AND recent health records and the results of any clinical investigations. If the Medical Reviewer requires to access further clinical records, they will contact the Board to request records.

**\*\*Please note: it is a legal requirement to respond to requests associated with a Level 1 & 2 review\*\***

1. **Why does this matter?**

If a death certificate is subject to a review, the Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) **cannot be issued until the review has been completed**.  Therefore any delays at any point along the process could delay families in being able to complete the funeral arrangements of their loved one.

1. **Actions for You:**

As a Doctor, you are asked to ensure the following:

* Follow the guidance on completion of death certificates (found at <http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2014)27.pdf>
* Access the leaflets about the Death Certification Review Service. These are available on the NHS Highland intranet site under *Well Informed/Death Certification*)
* Complete the dedicated Death Certification training modules on the [NES website](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/medicine/about-medical-training/generic-training/support-of-national-training/the-certification-of-death-(scotland)-act-2011-education-and-learning-resources.aspx) and <http://nhs.learnprouk.com> under CPD.
* Know that if you certify a death and the death certificate is selected for review, you will make yourself available to the Medical Reviewer by recording a useable telephone number on the MCCD. In the event that you will not be available, you must provide details of a clinical colleague who has access to the deceased’s medical records and can speak with the Medical Reviewer in your absence.
* Discuss any death you certify with your consultant / senior clinical colleagues.
* Know where to access the leaflets in place for bereaved families and if certifying a death, advise them of the possibility of the death certificate being selected for review.
* Ensure that if you send any emails concerning a death certificate it is only using a secure nhs.net email address.

1. **Supporting You:**

Speaking to people who have recently been bereaved is never going to be easy. It requires sensitivity, tact and empathy. Time spent with people following the death of a loved one will be greatly appreciated. While there can never be one approach that will meet every situation there are resources to help you feel more confident in this area.

* NES website: Support After Death [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) has helpful information for healthcare professionals.
* CRUSE dos/ don’ts in bereavement
* FY1 induction training with Healthcare Chaplains covers some elements of bereavement
* HIS Tips for Certifying Doctors also provides a list of helpful tips for completion of the MCCD. This can be found on the NHS Highland Death Certification Intranet Page as detailed below.
* Further information and links to useful websites are available on the NHS Highland Intranet Page under ***Well Informed/Death Certification***. If you have any questions or require any further information, please email [Death Certification Admin](mailto:High-UHB.DeathCertificationAdmin@nhs.net).

1. **Role of the Bereavement Officer (Raigmore Hospital Only):**

Following the introduction of the new death certification process in Scotland, the following changes took place in Raigmore:

* All Death Certificate books were removed from the wards and are held centrally within the Bereavement Office, with exception of the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU) and the Emergency Department.
* For deaths that occur **in hours,** the Bereavement Officer should be contacted to take the Death Certificate book to the Ward for completion.  Contact details for the Bereavement Officer are available on the Death Certificate page or via the hospital switchboard.
* For deaths that occur **out of hours**, a message should be left on the voicemail of the Bereavement Officer who will attend the Ward on the following morning or on a Monday if the death occurs over a weekend.
* In exceptional circumstances a certificate may be issued from a book held within the 3 areas highlighted above.
* A process of initial review of all death certificates will be undertaken to ensure accuracy of completion of the certificate prior to it being released to the family of the bereaved. The Bereavement Officer at Raigmore Hospital will be able to provide further information and assist you with this process.

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