

**HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER  
NURSING POLICY MANUAL**

**CARE OF A BODY AFTER DEATH**

Effective Date: 12/26/07

Cross Referenced: 8620.25a

Reviewed Date: 2/09

Revised Date: 12/1/2015

Policy No: 8620.26A

Origin: Division of Nursing

Authority: Chief Nursing Officer

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**SCOPE**

All RNs in Inpatient and Outpatient Areas

**PURPOSE**

To outline process of appropriate notification, preparation of a body after death, completing paperwork, transporting and releasing of deceased body to mortician or Medical Examiner.

**POLICY**

HRMC will continue to handle a patient with respect and dignity after death and be respectful of the family's need to visit.

**PROCEDURE**

**I. Nursing Procedure for Care of a Body after Death**

**A. EQUIPMENT LIST:**

1. Mortician Release Form
2. Personal Property Receipt Form
3. Morgue Book
4. Mortuary Pack
5. Morgue Stretcher
6. Communicable Disease Alert Form

**B. Procedural Steps**

1. When Respirations and Apical Pulse Cease
  - a. RN notifies MD. The MD will notify the family. Family needs to supply name of mortician and how belongings are to be handled. (Hospital personnel should under no circumstances notify a mortician or recommend one to the family.)
  - b. Prior to wrapping the body, check with MD to see if patient's family wishes to see the patient.
  - c. Notify the Nursing Home or Extended Care Facility if applicable
  - d. Notify Spiritual/Religious consultant. if family has made a request.
  - e. Notify Organ and Tissue Sharing Network at 1-800-541-0075 (See Administrative Policy AD72)
  - f. Notify Medical Examiner (If Medical Examiner's case see below). Do not remove any supportive devices (ET Tube, IV, etc.) if it is Medical Examiner's case.
    - i. No previous medical treatment
    - ii. Death suspected as suicide
    - iii. Homicide
    - iv. Deaths in suspicious or unusual manner.
    - v. Body found unattended
    - vi. Death within 24 hours after admission to a hospital
    - vii. D.O.A
    - viii. E.R. deaths
    - ix. Deaths in Operating Room.
      - x. Deaths within the first 24 hours following surgery.
      - xi. Death from causes which might constitute a threat to public health.
      - xii. Death related to diseases resulting from employment or to accident while employed.

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- xiii. Sudden or unexpected deaths of infants and children under three (3) years of age and fetal and maternal deaths occurring without medical attendance.

2. Preparing the body after death

a. If family will be visiting with patient

- i. Close eyelids if patient has been pronounced within minutes of expiring, otherwise do not touch eyelids as it may cause postmortem tissue damage.
- ii. If dentures are already in, leave in place, otherwise assure dentures go with belongings.
- iii. Comb hair
- iv. Straighten bedding
- v. Straighten body and leave one pillow under head
- vi. Remove protective and supportive devices
- vii. Cleanse soiled body parts if time permits
- viii. Cover patient with clean gown and sheet
- ix. Allow family to be alone with deceased or stay with them as indicated.
- x. Collect and list all belongings on personal property receipt, check Valuables and belonging section of the EMR to confirm items. Have next of kin sign for them.

b. Family not coming in or After family leaves

- i. Cleanse soiled body parts, place absorbent pad under the buttocks
- ii. Close wounds with clean dressing and use paper tape to gently secure
- iii. Remove linens and gown
- iv. Leave dentures in place; otherwise assure they go with belongings.
- v. Place body in shroud, do not tie any of the extremities
- vi. Place one identification label/tag on the great toe and the other on the outside of the shroud. If communicable diseases alert form if necessary, attach that to the outside of the shroud as well.
- vii. Remove all jewelry. For any rings that can not be removed, tape them to the finger. Document this was done. Collect and list all belongings on personal property receipt/valuables envelope, check Valuables and belonging section of the EMR to confirm items. Place in labeled belonging bag and send to morgue with the body.
- viii. Arrange prompt transportation of the body to the morgue

**II. Transport and Release of the Body**

- A. During the week from 0800-1630, Materials Management will release the body to the mortician or Medical Examiner. When Materials Management is closed, the Administrative Coordinator will release the body to the mortician or Medical Examiner.
- B. The Administrative Coordinator or Transporter will bring the body to the morgue, complete the log in the morgue box and leave the Mortician Release form and Personal Belongings form.
- C. Administrative Coordinator notifies Materials Management that there is a body in the morgue.
- D. The Administrative Coordinator will notify Materials Management the status of the body: is the body is released from Medical Examiner? Is the body released from Tissue Sharing Network?
  - a. If the body is not released, check the paperwork in the morgue box located outside of Materials Department. If the body is not released and the funeral home is requesting to pick up the body, contact the Administrative Coordinator for an update on the status. The Administrative

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Coordinator will complete the paperwork as indicated.

- b. If it is a Medical Examiner's case, the Medical Examiner will pick up the body.
- E. Morgue Box (\*If the person picking up the body is unfamiliar to you check their credentials)
- a. **Mortician log**
    1. Fill in the name of the mortician on the correct line
    2. Ask mortician to sign for the body
    3. You sign that you released the body
  - b. **Mortician Release form**
    1. No body will be released without this completed form; if the forms are missing call the Administrative Coordinator
    2. Fill in mortician's name and address
    3. Sign to release the body
    4. Mortician signs to accept the body
    5. Once signed, return original form to Medical Records
  - c. **Personal Belongings form:** Check to see if there are any belongings listed
    1. If yes, mortician will check the body and you will both need to sign the form
    2. If no, no need to sign; draw a line through the form
    3. Once form complete, return original to Medical Records
    4. When body is released, mortician or designated family member must sign out all belongings.
- F. Death Certificates
1. Electronic (see 8620.025a)
  2. Questions regarding the electronic death certificate can be discussed with CNO or Director of Medical Records or switchboard operators.
- G. Morgue
1. Open the door, turn on the light
  2. Gloves are located outside the morgue – when the box is empty ask the Storeroom to DepReq one out for the morgue
  3. Keep the double doors by the Mailroom closed while transferring patient from one stretcher to another.
  4. Alert Environmental Services that the stretcher needs to be cleaned.

**DOCUMENTATION**

- A. Date/Time and Name of physician notified
- B. Name of person who pronounced patient dead.
- C. Notification of the Sharing Network
- D. Anything unusual concerning death.
- E. Disposition of clothing and valuables
- F. Notification of Nurses Home or LTC facility if appropriate

**REFERENCES**

Potter, Patricia. Perry, Anne. Clinical Nursing Skills and Techniques, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Mosby (2010) p. 415-417

<https://edrs.nj.gov>

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First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Middle Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Suffix \_\_\_\_\_

Sex

Male

Female

Date of Death

**Select Month**

Year

Month

Day

Place of Death\*

Inpatient

Emergency Room

**After completing form fax to Switchboard Operator at (908) 441-1133**

Location Type \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

Municipality \_\_\_\_\_

Dept Name &  
Extension \_\_\_\_\_

Person Providing  
Information \_\_\_\_\_