



MTF's Medical Examiner/Coroner Advisory Committee

Position Statement on the Timely Acquisition of Autopsy Findings

After Tissue/Organ Donation

The MTF Medical Examiner/Coroner Advisory Committee believes and supports the position of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) regarding the procurement of tissues and organs for transplantation. This position is that tissue/organ donation can be accomplished in virtually all cases without detriment to evidence collection, postmortem examination, determination of cause and manner of death, or the conduction of criminal or civil legal proceedings.

In order to proceed with the preparation and processing of tissues for transplantation it is necessary for MTF to have timely access to autopsy findings that include gross anatomical description and findings, any final toxicology, histology, chemical, neuropathology and other ancillary studies, if and as performed.

The Advisory Committee believes that timely and appropriate release of tissue can be accomplished through the utilization of an Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) or Tissue Bank (TB) Liaison. A single point of contact from the OPO/TB Medical Examiner/Coroner Liaison can maximize communication with a busy Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) or Coroner's Office.

The Advisory Committee believes that the requests for autopsy findings should occur immediately and the language of the request should inquire about any information that identifies the cause of death as well as any communicable diseases or malignancies.

Since MTF is unable to prepare and process tissues for transplantation beyond four years of procurement autopsy findings must be obtained prior to four years from that date. For purposes of family disclosure an earlier date is, of course, preferable.

The Committee also recommends that following the recovery of tissues the OPO/TB should report to the assigned Medical Examiner, Coroner, or Investigator that the donor case was recovered and all information related to the donor's death is time sensitive. The Committee also suggests that some method of notation be made on the OME's records to indicate that the decedent was a tissue/organ donor so office staff is aware that the local OPO/TB will be requesting autopsy information as soon as available.

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