

ADULT AUTOPSY CONSENT

(TO BE READ TO THE PERSON AUTHORIZING AUTOPSY)

Name: _____

Date and Time of Death: _____

SECTION 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An autopsy is the examination of a body after death, including removal of internal organs, in order to determine the cause of death and the presence of disease. An autopsy may also provide information for diagnostic, educational or research purposes. We are asking your permission to perform this autopsy for the purpose of determining the cause of death and better understanding disease.

DISPOSITION OF ORGANS

An autopsy often requires that organs be treated with preservatives for a period of time, a process called fixation. This allows for later complete detailed examination. Although an autopsy may not provide answers to all questions regarding a death, later examination of fixed organs may provide more information and allow for a more complete autopsy.

We are able to release the body prior to completing this detailed examination. The hospital will return all organs with the body when the body is released, except for any organs for which prolonged fixation or complete detailed examination is required to complete the autopsy unless you designate otherwise.

It is not possible to know in advance which organs may need to be retained for detailed examination. As the individual authorizing the autopsy you have the right to control final disposition of the organs as well as to restrict the autopsy to examination of certain organs. You may choose to have the organs kept with the body for burial or cremation. Or, after the later detailed examination is completed the organs will be disposed of in the same manner as surgical specimens. The autopsy report, usually available within eight weeks, will indicate which organs were retained.

QUESTIONS

1. May all organs be preserved and retained for detailed examination? Yes No
2. Do you wish to place any limitations on the autopsy? Yes No If yes, please specify: _____
3. May organs be retained for medical education and research? Yes No
4. Do you have any questions regarding the scope and purpose of the autopsy? _____

Consent Given by:

_____/_____
PRINT NAME SIGNATURE Date: _____ Time: _____ (Required)

_____/_____/_____
RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT ADDRESS TELEPHONE NUMBER

Authorization Obtained: In Person Via Telephone

I have explained the above statements to the patient and/or appropriate parties and answered all questions.

Physician: _____/_____
PRINT NAME SIGNATURE Pager #: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ (Required)

Witness/Interpreter: _____/_____
PRINT NAME (Required for Witness phone consent) SIGNATURE Date: _____ Time: _____ (Required)

SECTION 2 - Clinical staff must complete the following:

Physicians to receive copies of autopsy results: _____

Please indicate any unresolved clinical problems or questions: _____

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APPENDIX A. NOTIFICATION OF MEDICAL EXAMINER

The Office of the Medical Examiner tracks the deaths of some adults, all children and infants and some fetuses for a variety of medical-legal and/or public health-related reasons. The medical examiner must be notified under the following circumstances.

- (1) death where criminal violence appears to have taken place, regardless of the time interval between the incident and death, and regardless of whether such violence appears to have been the immediate cause of death, or a contributory factor thereto;
- (2) death by accident or unintentional injury, regardless of time interval between the incident and death, and regardless of whether such injury appears to have been the immediate cause of death, or a contributory factor thereto;
- (3) suicide, regardless of the time interval between the incident and death;
- (4) death under suspicious or unusual circumstances;
- (5) death following an unlawful abortion;
- (6) death related to occupational illness or injury;
- (7) death in custody, in any jail or correctional facility, or in any mental health or mental retardation institution;
- (8) death where suspicion of abuse of a child, family or household member, elder person or disabled person exists;
- (9) death due to poison or acute or chronic use of drugs or alcohol;
- (10) skeletal remains;
- (11) death associated with diagnostic or therapeutic procedures;
- (12) sudden death when the decedent was in apparent good health;
- (13) death within twenty-four hours of admission to a hospital or nursing home;
- (14) death in any public or private conveyance;
- (15) fetal death, as defined by section two hundred and two of chapter one hundred and eleven, where the period of gestation has been twenty weeks or more, or where fetal weight is three hundred and fifty grams or more;
- (15) death of children under the age of 18 years from any cause;
- (17) any person found dead;
- (18) death in any emergency treatment facility, medical walk-in center, child care center, or under foster care; or
- (19) deaths occurring under such other circumstances as the chief medical examiner shall prescribe in regulations promulgated pursuant to the provisions of chapter 30A.

A physician, police officer, hospital administrator, licensed nurse, department of children and families social worker, or licensed funeral director, within the commonwealth, who, having knowledge of such an unreported death, fails to notify the office of the chief medical examiner of such death shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars. Such failure shall also be reported to the appropriate board of registration, where applicable.

Appendix B. Consent Priority

After determining that the case does not need to be reported to the Medical Examiner, or if the Medical Examiner has declined the case, identify the person authorized to consent for autopsy according to the following priority list:

- (a) Power of attorney for healthcare
- (b) Health Care Proxy (Massachusetts General Law c.201D)
- (c) spouse
- (d) adult child
- (e) parent (a parent who is under the age of 18 may consent to the autopsy for his or her child)
- (f) adult sibling (all must agree)
- (g) adult grandchild
- (h) grandparent of the decedent
- (i) adult who exhibited special care and concern for the decedent
- (j) guardian of the decedent at the time of death
- (k) the person authorized to dispose of the decedent's body.

If a member of the same class as has consented to the autopsy makes their opposition to the autopsy known to the hospital, no autopsy shall be performed. (i.e., if one adult sibling has consented and another adult sibling subsequently makes known their objection there will be no autopsy).

A separated spouse must specifically waive consent in writing, or by witnessed telephone consent, before a member of a lower priority class may give consent. A divorced spouse may not be consulted about the autopsy.