

National Institutes of Health
Clinical Center
Nursing and Patient Care Services

PROCEDURE: Transfer to the Morgue

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A. Essential Information

1. Obtain “Death Packet” envelope NIH-2589 (9-86) and follow instructions.
2. The physician obtains consent for any postmortem examination and notifies the next of kin. The physician contacts the pathology resident (301-496-2441) during working hours or by contacting the page operator for the on-call staff on off-shifts, weekends, and holidays.
3. For deaths of patients in Special Respiratory Isolation, refer to specific procedures and guidelines listed in the reference list at the end of this document.

B. Equipment List

1. CHS Supplies
 - a. Shroud Pack
 - b. Gloves (non-sterile)
 - c. Bathing supplies
 - d. Cooling blanket for bodies greater than 250 lbs/114 kg.
2. Supplies located on 11W (or if equipment is not on 11 West, they can direct calls to the unit where the equipment is located)
 - a. Golvo[®] Lift device with morgue attachment (to transfer shrouded body from unit bed to stretcher)
 - b. Disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet
 - c. Stretcher
3. Supplies located in morgue
 - a. Golvo[®] Lift device with morgue attachment kept in morgue to transfer the body to the morgue drawer
 - b. Cooling Blanket for bodies > 250 lbs/114 kg

C. Procedure

STEPS	KEY POINTS
1. After the physician has pronounced the patient as expired, provide immediate support to family, staff, and significant others as indicated.	1. The death of any patient whether anticipated or not is a stressful situation. The Clinical Center has multiple supports such as spiritual ministry, social workers, and psychological consultants to assist in the process.
2. Arrange for family viewing at bedside.	2. Once the deceased is transported to the morgue, the body may not be viewed unless it is transported to a funeral home. The Clinical Center does not have a viewing room in the morgue. In the event a body is to be kept on the unit for several hours in order to facilitate viewing by family members, it is recommended that the body be placed on a cooling blanket (4° C, manual mode without probe) for up to 12 hours.

<p>3. Determine from the physician if this is a Medical Examiner’s Case (check web site indicated on reference #7).</p>	<p>3. If physician determines that death is a Medical Examiner’s case, the Medical Examiner is contacted and makes a decision regarding autopsy status. In general, Medical Examiner cases are those involving patients arriving dead on arrival, accidental causes, or those who die in association with a therapeutic procedure.</p>
<p>4. Notify the Admissions Office (301-496-3315) and nursing supervisor of any death. Advise the Admissions Office of a request for autopsy and if the patient is > 250 lbs./114 kg.</p>	<p>4. The Admissions Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provides the document referred to in the death packet b. Photocopies forms such as the Death Certificate for the medical record and contacts the mortuary c. Facilitates special arrangements for large bodies > 250 lbs./114 kg.
<p>5. Collect patient property and valuables, and complete the Clothing, Property, and Valuables List (NIH Forms 1019).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. RN may, if the family is not available or the patient has previously directed that valuables not be returned to family, place valuables into envelope marked, “Patient’s Valuables.” Submit envelope with valuables to Admissions Office. 	<p>5. RN may return valuables to family. RN should, however, document the disposition of the inventoried valuables. If the family is not available or, the patient has previously directed that valuables not be returned to family, place valuables into envelope marked, “Patient’s Valuables.” Submit envelope with valuables to Admissions Office.</p>
<p>6. Collect patient’s medical record (old and new) for pick-up by Admissions Office.</p>	<p>6. A complete medical record is essential.</p>
<p>7. Prepare the body according to status of routine death, medical examiner’s case, or autopsy.</p>	<p>7. Refer to CC Policy M83-2 Preparation Of Cadavers For Post-Mortem Examinations</p>
<p>8. Open shroud packet and follow instructions in packet.</p>	<p>8. Save one completed identification tag for the drawer handle in the morgue.</p>
<p>9. Obtain a Golvo® lift device and accessories for transfer of bodies to the morgue.</p>	<p>9. Golvo® lift device with morgue attachment and Golvo® disposable OctoSheet are either located on 11W or the 11W staff can advise about the location of the device.</p>
<p>10. Transfer shrouded body from bed to Golvo® lift device following instructions from the Golvo® manual including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Place lift device over bed and then lock device and bed. 	<p>10. The proper use of a lift device can help prevent musculoskeletal injuries to staff.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Turn body to one side and place the disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet under the body ensuring that the strap side is not against the body. c. Attach straps to lift. d. Verify that straps are secure. e. With lift device unplugged, push arrow up on hand device until body clears bed. f. Unlock lift device and move device and body until over the stretcher. g. Lock lift device and stretcher then lower body to gurney. h. Once body is on gurney, unhook Golvo[®] disposable OctoSheet from lift device. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. The lift device will not operate if plugged in. The lift device is plugged in when not in use to re-charge the battery. h. Keeping the body on the disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet will make the transfer process easier once in the morgue.
<p>11. Contact the NIH Police and ask for an officer to be dispatched to the patient care unit. Once the officer arrives on the patient care unit, he/she will accompany the nursing staff to the morgue. The officer is responsible for bringing the key to open the morgue.</p>	<p>11. Police officers do not assist with any lifting of the body nor do they enter the morgue. For off-tours and weekends, the nursing supervisor is available to assist with the transfer. The location of the morgue is 10/B2A20 (close to the loading dock).</p>
<p>12. Proceed to the morgue with the shrouded body.</p>	<p>12. For off tours and weekends the nursing supervisor may assist with the transfer. Recommended staff requirements based on patient size are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Wt. < 150 lbs/68 kg = 1-2 staff b. Wt. 151-250 lbs/68-114 kg = 2 or more staff c. Wt. ≥ 251 lbs/115 kg = Notify the Admissions Office to arrange for a stat autopsy or stat funeral home pick-up. Shrouded bodies ≥ 251 lbs/114 kg may need to be placed on a stretcher and cooling blanket while the morgue staff are notified.
<p>13. Once in the morgue, open a middle door fully and pull the drawer out 3/4 of the way. DO NOT PULL THE DRAWER OUT COMPLETELY.</p>	<p>13. The uppermost and lowermost drawers are <u>not</u> to be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The morgue drawers are not designed to be fully extended. The drawers are labeled to indicate maximum extension. b. Caution must be used when unlocking a drawer and pulling it out since injury to the hand may occur. c. The Morgue Supervisor labels which drawers are to be used and which ones are not in use.

<p>14. Verify that the locking mechanism is activated and that the drawer is stable to receive the body.</p>	<p>14. If the drawer is defective, select another drawer with a correctly operating locking mechanism. Report any problems in the morgue to the Nurse Manager or Administrative Coordinator, and the Laboratory of Pathology, Clinical Lab Manager (301-594-9532).</p>
<p>15. Move the Golvo[®] lift device kept in the morgue over the stretcher, body, and disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lock the stretcher and Golvo[®] lift. Unplug the Golvo[®] lift and attach the straps to the lift device frame. Verify that the straps are secured and press the up arrow on the hand device until the body clears the level of the stretcher and morgue drawer. Unlock the Golvo[®] lift device and move the lift device with the body until it is over the opened drawer. Position the body in the drawer so that the head enters the drawer before the feet. 	<p>15.</p>
<p>16. Lower the body with the lift device until the body rests on the drawer. Then unstrap the disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet from the lift device.</p>	<p>16. The use of good body mechanics is essential during all these steps of the procedure.</p>
<p>17. Leave the disposable Golvo[®] OctoSheet in the drawer.</p>	<p>17.</p>
<p>18. Push the body forward until the full length of the body rests in the drawer.</p>	<p>18. This step of the procedure will require more than one staff.</p>
<p>19. Push the drawer forward into the refrigerator and close the door verifying that the door latch is secure.</p>	<p>19. This step of the procedure will require more than one staff.</p>
<p>20. Place the body's identification tag on the door handle.</p>	<p>20.</p>
<p>21. Complete Morgue Log information in the morgue by writing: name of deceased, date, time, the nursing unit where the patient was, and the signature of the nurse transferring patient.</p>	<p>21. The Morgue Log provides information to the Laboratory of Pathology department about the status of deceased received and released from the morgue.</p>

22. Notify Housekeeping Department (301-496-2417) to report any cleanliness problems associated with the morgue and drawers. For after hours and weekends, call the signal operator (301-496-1211) for housekeeping assistance and request a return call.	22. Report any morgue problems (ex: malfunctioning drawers) to the Laboratory of Pathology Clinical Lab Manager (301-594-9532).
23. Document in MIS the disposition of the body.	23.

D. References:

1. Liko Original Sling, Highback, type 20, 21 Instruction Guide (1999) (Golvo[®] lift device and accessory manual)
2. NIH Clinical Center Infection Control Guidelines, 2003
3. NIH Clinical Center, Medical Staff handbook, 2003, Death of a Patient
4. NIH-2589 (986) Death Packet Envelope
5. NIH, Clinical Center, Special Respiratory Isolation Training Manual, Morgue Procedures for Special Respiratory Isolation, 2003.
6. Medical Administrative Series, M83-2 (rev.) 9 September 1997, Preparation of Cadavers for Postmortem Examination
7. National Cancer Institute, Center for Cancer Research, Laboratory of Pathology, http://home.ccr.cancer.gov/LOP/Clinical/autopsy/aut_spec.asp
8. NIH, Ambulatory Care Services, April 2004, "Patient Expirations", policy # 201 & procedure, pp. 1-4.