

Patient Information Leaflet

Relatives Information for Post Mortem Examination

Produced by:
Mortuary Department

Date: February 2013
Review due: February 2016



If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.

Please accept our sympathies for your loss. This leaflet answers a few of the common questions in relation to the post mortem examination procedure. We appreciate you may not wish to be given too much information at this time, but if you feel you require more information or if you have any questions or concerns then staff at the hospital will be happy to assist. After you have read this leaflet and had a chance to think about your decision, staff at the hospital will go through a consent form with you.

What is a Post Mortem examination?

A post mortem examination is a medical examination after death. It is sometimes referred to as an autopsy. The examination is carried out by a specially trained doctor called a pathologist. They are assisted by one or more fully trained anatomical pathology technicians or APTs.

By law the coroner can order a post mortem examination. A ministry of Justice 'A guide to Coroners and Inquest' booklet is available. You will be contacted directly by the coroner's officer regarding the post mortem.

In contrast to a coroners post mortem, the hospital post mortem examination is not undertaken to establish the cause of death but to further understand your relative's disease process and effectiveness of treatment he/she may have received. It may also help in the diagnosis and treatment of other people in the future.

What is involved?

The examination takes place in the mortuary department of St. Mary's Hospital. If it is necessary to transfer your relative to another hospital, you will be informed of this prior to their transfer.

The examination involves an incision being made and the organs removed to allow the pathologist to examine them. This may involve an examination of the head and brain. During the examination small sections of tissue may be retained so that the pathologist may examine the cells further under a microscope. In some circumstances larger pieces of tissue and/or whole organs may be retained to enable more detailed examination. This may involve the tissue or organ to be transferred to another laboratory. After the examination, the organs are returned to the body. The organs may not be returned in their original position in the body. The incisions made are sutured using thread or staples and the deceased is washed and dressed in a shroud or their own clothes if preferred.

Your relative will be treated in a respectful and dignified manner at all times.

What happens to the retained pieces of tissue?

The pieces of tissue retained are taken to a laboratory and processed into paraffin wax blocks. From these very thin sections can be cut off and placed on glass slides to enable the pathologist to look at the cellular structure under a microscope. The wax blocks are about the size of a postage stamp.

After the pathologist has completed his microscopic examination, the wax blocks and slides will be handled as per your wishes. The person who asks you to sign the consent form will explain all the options available. These include:

- 1) having all tissue returned with the deceased before the funeral,
- 2) having the opportunity to have a separate funeral for the pieces of tissue,
- 3) allowing the tissue to be used for the further education of medical professionals, clinical research or clinical audit.
- 4) laboratory disposal of tissue in a sensitive manner, usually by incineration.

The larger pieces of tissue and the whole organs may be sent to another laboratory on the mainland. The processing and examination may take several weeks. The options available to you for the disposal of the tissue and organs are the same and will be explained to you by the person asking you to complete the consent form.

Can I refuse or change my mind?

You are well within your rights to refuse to consent for examination. Please be assured that if you refuse to consent no examination will take place.

Should you change your mind please contact the mortuary department or the bereavement officer.

If you have any concerns or questions about this request or the consent form, please do not hesitate to contact the bereavement office on **01983 534615** or the mortuary department on **01983 534214**.

Will I be able to see my relative after the examination?

Yes, you will be able to see your relative either in the hospital chapel of rest or at your nominated funeral director. The incisions and sutures made during the examination will not normally be visible to you when you see your relative.

Will it delay funeral arrangements?

You will be informed of the time and date of the examination. If your wishes are to have any tissue or organ samples reunited with the deceased, there may be a delay. The person completing the consent form with you will inform you of the timescale involved.

If you require the funeral to be carried out as soon as possible for religious or other reasons, then all effort will be made to carry out the examination as soon as possible. The person completing the consent form with you will be able to inform you of how quickly the examination can take place.

When will I receive the results of the examination?

The results of the examination usually take about 6 weeks depending on what tests are being carried out. A copy of the report will be placed in your relative's hospital records and the findings discussed with you by the clinician who was looking after your relative.

You will be given the telephone number of the appropriate person to contact to arrange an appointment to see the clinician at the time of signing the consent form.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on **111**

We value your views on our service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on **01983 534850**.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle of Wight NHS Trust
St. Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle Of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on **03000 61 61 61** or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone **0800 169 0 169** to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

بای تسد نام چرت
(Urdu)

Interprete disponibili
(Italian)

Interprète disponible
(French)

Tradutor disponibil
(Portuguese)

Dolmetscher zur Verfügung
(German)

ةحاتم لا مچرتم
(Arabic)

Intérprete disponibles
(Spanish)

Tolk tilgængelige
(Danish)

Tlumočník k dispozici
(Czech)

גישהל תיני מגרתמ
(Hebrew)

διερμηνέα διαθέσιμα
(Greek)

دوج ومم چرتم
(Persian)

Értelmező rendelkezésre álló
(Hungarian)

Tolk tilgjengelig
(Norwegian)

Tolk beschikbaar
(Dutch)

Доступный переводчик
(Russian)

Interpret disponibil
(Romanian)

Tercüman kullanılabilir
(Turkish)

Tolk tillgängliga
(Swedish)

Interpreter ay magagamit
(Filipino)

Tłumaczka dostępna
(Polish)

解釋器可以使用
(Chinese)