

# SFHHCS15

## Undertake a postmortem examination



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### Overview

This standard relates to post mortem examination. This includes examination of the deceased or body parts by dissection and evisceration techniques and may involve the use of photography and taking samples of blood, urine, bodily fluids and swabs or substances found on or in the deceased. Post mortems may also be performed in the presence of police or legal authorities.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies.

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### Performance criteria

*You must be able to:*

- P1 work within your level of competence, responsibility and accountability
- P2 apply appropriate health and safety measures, infection prevention and control and personal protective equipment to minimise the risks associated with post mortem procedures
- P3 confirm the deceased individual's identity, valid consent and authorisation for the post mortem and purpose of the examination
- P4 review all available information and circumstances of death and identify factors which may influence the methods, approach and risks associated with the post mortem examination
- P5 position equipment and instruments with due regard for safety of self and others
- P6 note the condition of the deceased individual and any factors which may provide an indication of life style, possible substance abuse, disease, infection or cause/contributing factors of death
- P7 where unexpected or suspicious findings are made, cease the post-mortem and consult with colleagues to agree next action
- P8 where appropriate, take relevant images during the post mortem which may be of significance or interest and show clear evidence of findings
- P9 measure and record any scars, distinguishing marks, wounds and any signs of medical intervention
- P10 make initial incision suitable for type of examination whilst causing minimal detrimental damage to appearance of the deceased and avoiding risks to self and others
- P11 eviscerate organs, systems and anatomical features in sequence or combination to meet needs of examination
- P12 note indications, signs or symptoms of significance and preserve evidence which may assist to determine the cause and/or factors contributing to fatality
- P13 weigh and measure removed organs as required for the post mortem examination
- P14 ensure any organs, tissues, fluids or other anatomical features are removed and preserved in appropriate conditions for further investigations and forward the request and samples to the relevant authorised individuals
- P15 accurately record all findings from initial examination and dissection
- P16 compile an interim report for key stakeholders
- P17 ensure all referred investigative results are available for the final report
- P18 create a detailed report of the post-mortem in the correct format for the target audience
- P19 maintain full, accurate and legible records of information and store in appropriate location for future reference and traceability in line with current legislation, guidelines, local policies and protocols

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### Knowledge and understanding

*You need to know and understand:*

- K1 your own level of competence, authority, specialist knowledge base
- K2 the inherent limitations of health and safety measures and infection prevention and control during post mortem examinations
- K3 how to apply the appropriate health and safety measures and personal protective equipment required for post mortem examinations in accordance with current legislation, policies, procedures and protocols
- K4 the range of stakeholders and individuals involved, their information needs and responsibilities
- K5 the appropriate policies, protocols and procedures for consent and authorisation for pathological investigations and how to ensure these have been completed prior to the planning of the post mortem
- K6 why it is important and how to obtain the deceased history and identify pertinent details for the post mortem examination
- K7 the importance of checking whether chain of custody requirements are necessary and how this affects the post mortem examination
- K8 the underpinning reasons why post mortems on suspicious death or from known infectious diseases must be performed within designated establishments and by authorised personnel
- K9 the importance of the current ethical and legal policy and guidance relating to the retention of tissues and organs, maintaining dignity and respect during post mortems
- K10 the importance of maintaining the security and respect of the deceased during the procedure
- K11 the relevance, confidentiality issues and application of imaging procedures used in post mortems in line with legal and organisational requirements
- K12 the application of human anatomy, physiology and pathology necessary for conducting post mortem examinations
- K13 the range, types and purpose of pathological examinations performed during post mortem examinations
- K14 the range, type and purpose of equipment used for dissection and evisceration
- K15 how to prepare and check operating performance of the equipment, resources and appropriate recording devices for the post mortem
- K16 the importance of examining the body thoroughly before performing the dissection and how to take and record measurements of scars, distinguishing marks, wounds and any signs of medical intervention in accordance with current legislation, policies, protocols and procedures
- K17 the ways in which key indicators and signs of life style, substance abuse, disease or infection which can be observed and recorded during the post-mortem
- K18 why it is important to recognise and take relevant action in the event of

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- unexpected or suspicious findings
- K19 why it is important to use the correct methods in the appropriate sequence and combination for dissection and evisceration of organs, relevant to purpose of examination in accordance with current legislation, policies, protocols and procedures
- K20 the importance of and how to accurately record factual findings and the implications of failure to do so
- K21 how to obtain photographs, digital images and to record observations of relevant features
- K22 the importance of and how to take samples and biopsies relevant to the type and category of post mortem
- K23 the procedures for the labelling samples and recording comprehensive details on samples taken, their destination for processing and the consequences of failure to do so
- K24 the importance of weighing and measuring organs and fluids and how to accurately weigh and record these
- K25 how to avoid damage to dissected or eviscerated organs during post mortem examinations
- K26 how to complete all necessary documentation accurately, in the required format, and store in correct location in accordance with current legislation, policies, protocols and procedures
- K27 the current national legislation, guidelines, local policies and protocols which affect your work practice
- K28 the policies and guidance that clarify your scope of practice, accountabilities and the working relationship between yourself and others

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### Additional Information

#### External Links

This standard links with the following dimension within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004):

Dimension: HWB6 Assessment and treatment and planning

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**Suite** Healthcare Science

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