

## DEATH PRONOUNCEMENT CHECKLIST

### 1. Required Orders

- DNR order in place
- Physician order to pronounce death

### 2. Prepare family

- Review purpose
- Review process
- Who to call
- Do not call 911

### 3. Arrival in home and Pronouncement

- Be reassuring and confident
- Address the patient, introduce self
- Listen to heart for one full minute
- Check pupils for fixing and dilation
- Observe for respirations

### 4. Post Mortem Care

- Inform family of the elements of pm care
- Ask re: cultural considerations
- Invite family to participate or observe
- Place patient in supine position

- Elevate the head of the bed, to prevent livor mortis which is the pooling of blood appearing as a dark reddish purple color on the face.
- Straighten the limbs
- Gently hold eyelids closed, until they remain closed. If eyes do not remain closed, moisten gauze pads and place over closed lids until they remain closed without assistance
- Rigor mortis, the progressive stiffening of muscles can begin as soon as 10 minutes after death, beginning with the face. For this reason place a rolled up washcloth to keep the mouth closed until the jaw stiffens.
- Wash body- While a full bath may not be necessary, remove all visible blood and body fluids.
- Remove SQ devices, Foley
- Leave in place PICCs, Ports, Pleurex
- Replace ostomy appliances with new ones
- If incontinence; replace depends, use padding
- Change linens as needed, change pillow case.
- Change into clean clothing
- Comb hair

5. Contact physician and Completing the paperwork

- Contact the physician at the time of death – that death has occurred and where body will be taken.
- Have forms and black pens with you.
- For Massachusetts pronouncements you must have your RN license number with you. (Take picture of your license and keep in phone, or on a slip of paper with your forms).
- Complete forms according to the form directions.
- Review the directions if you are not familiar with them.
- Time of death is when you pronounced the death, not the time you were contacted.
- Leave form for funeral director

## 6. Disposal of Medications

- Disposal from home
- Community Disposal