



515-725-1400

Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner Newsletter

Issue Number 4

9/1/2008

A Note from the Clerical Side of the SME Office

The clerical staff would like to say thank you for sending your forms to the SME office in a timely manner.

There are three items of concern on the Preliminary Report of Investigation by Medical Examiner (ME-1) forms sent to our office that need to be addressed. They are as follows:

- **County Assigned Case Numbers** are being left off the ME-1s. This is a very important part of the ME-1s for us. Please make sure all reports being sent to the SME office have been assigned a county case number.
- We are finding it very difficult at times to **read the signatures** on the ME-1s. We would like everyone to print/type the name above the signature on the ME-1 form. We realize this will be an extra step, but it will save phone calls and time spent trying to figure out signatures.
- Also, we are finding under the **Information about Occurrence** section that many are using just the word **hospital**. Please enter the exact name of the hospital in this section.

These items may seem to be minor details, but they are very important for our data entry here at the SME office.

We thank you in advance for your assistance!

Wendy Rech
Office Coordinator



Medical Records and Specimens

One of the challenging and incredibly important aspects in death investigation is discovering preexisting conditions or medical history on decedents. Sending medical records and documentation with the body can quicken our investigation. It also enriches our understanding of the case and provides leads for additional testing to increase accuracy in finding cause and manner of death.

This is especially true for people who are brought to the hospital and pronounced dead at the hospital or ER. Having not only the ER records but also the ER trip sheet can provide the pathologist a timeline and story of events just prior to death.

Also sending an ante-mortem specimen is important. We run full toxicological panels on all of our cases, and having the earliest specimen is ideal because it shows a more accurate representation of what was happening in the body prior to death.

Many of you are at the hospitals when death is pronounced, thus having direct access to the documents and specimens. Sending such materials with the body is greatly appreciated.

IOSME Statistics

Through August 31, 2008

Cases Performed..... 501

Death Certificates Signed..... 429

Cremation Permits Signed 175

Homicides Autopsied..... 31



Send the ID

The majority of cases autopsied at IOSME are identified by the use of a driver's license photo. Visual identification is the easiest and quickest way to identify, but it is also the most erroneous method of identification. We ask that you send the license or any photo ID with the body so we can make and document a visual comparison.



Med Log

Medications are commonly found at scenes and include everything from vitamins to hydrocodone. It is very important to document what medications you find.

We need to know:

- What the medications is.
- To whom it was prescribed.
- How many were prescribed and when.
- How many are left.

IOSME does not need to have the actual medications sent to us. The only time we should be receiving medications is when there is difficulty identifying them or there are assorted kinds mixed together.

The ME-7 (Medlist) form can be found at

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/do/medical_examiner_forms.asp

Legislative Update

Iowa Code Section 144.28 – Medical Certification

This updated code section clarifies who can sign a death certificate. Simply stated:

- Any and all non-natural manners of death must be certified by a state or county medical examiner.
- Natural deaths can be referred back to the primary care physician.

Please help us spread the word to your colleagues and those physicians who are not medical examiners (ME). Vital Records will be checking that the physician certifying non-natural manners of death is a current county or state medical examiner. Non-natural death certificates signed by non-MEs will be sent back for correction.

Iowa Code Section 222.12 – Deaths Investigated

This section updates the need for autopsies for institutional deaths. Simply stated:

- You must investigate institutional deaths.
- Private parties may request investigation and are responsible for payment; otherwise, the Department of Human Services will be responsible.
- Code 331.802 section K will be added to state:
“K. Death of a person committed or admitted to a state mental health institute, a state resource center, the state training school, or the Iowa juvenile home.”

Iowa Administrative Rule 641-127.7 – County Medical Examiner Investigators (CME-I)

The wording was changed to state that a CME-I will only have to attend a basic death investigation course and does not have to attend the master level course.



Iowa Donor Network

Good working relationships between organ and tissue recovery agencies and medical examiners can positively influence the donation process across Iowa and decrease the organ and tissue shortage that affects thousands of people each day. It is our goal to foster a positive, interactive relationship with Iowa's medical examiners and their designees.

Following the death of a loved one, many family members wish to participate in the anatomical gift donation process by authorizing the donation of their loved one's organs and/or tissues. In other cases, the decedent may have already legally consented to donation prior to death through the Iowa Donor Registry. A collaborative working relationship with the organ and tissue procurement agencies, local law enforcement agencies, and the medical community enables medical examiners to carefully evaluate each case to honor those consents for donation.

From January 2008 through July 2008, the Iowa Donor Network (IDN) has recovered tissue from 13 donors in the recovery suite at the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner. During the same time frame, IDN received 110 medical examiner referrals from out of hospital deaths. Because of these referrals, tissue was able to be recovered from 15 donors. Those donors alone will help almost 150 people receive the tissue transplants they desperately need.

IDN and state medical examiner staff meet quarterly to discuss any concerns, issues and successes with shared cases. Staff members at IDN are also committed to attending the ME101 sessions and routinely meet with county medical examiners and investigators. This fall, IDN will

have a booth at the IACME meeting to help increase our relationships with the medical examiners and investigators.

As a medical examiner in Iowa, your commitment to our state is invaluable. All out-of-hospital deaths may be referred to Iowa Donor Network to increase our work of bringing more transplantable tissues back to patients in Iowa who need them.

To learn more about working collaboratively with IDN or to schedule an educational session for your staff, please call Michelle Kelsey at 1-800-831-4131.



A Donate Life Organization

**Iowa Donor Network
January- July 2008
Non Hospital Death
Referral and Donor Activity Report**

<i>Referring Agency</i>	<i>Referrals</i>	<i>Tissue Donors</i>
Polk County Medical Examiner	47	7
Johnson County Medical Examiner	17	5
Palo Alto County Medical Examiner	4	
Scott County Medical Examiner/Sheriff Dept.	1	
Buena Vista County Medical Examiner	3	
Muscatine County Medical Examiner	5	
IOSME	11	2
Grundy County Medical Examiner/EMS	3	1
Baker Funeral Home	1	
Hardin County ME	1	
Adams County Sheriff	1	
Tripoli EMS	1	
Crawford County EMS	3	
Nursing Home	9	1
Winneshiek County Medical Examiner/EMS	3	1
Warren County Medical Examiner	1	
Hamilton's Funeral Home	2	2
Altoona Fire Department	2	
Burlington Fire Department	1	
Cerro Gordo County Medical Examiner	1	1
Mahaska County Medical Examiner	2	
Spirit Lake Mobile Intensive Care Unit	7	1
Pottawattamie County Medical Examiner	5	1
Kossuth County EMS	1	
Sioux County Medical Examiner	2	1
Pella EMS	3	
Home	2	
Hospice	3	1
Wallace Family Funeral Home	1	1
Keokuk County Medical Examiner	2	
Area Ambulance/Linn County Medical Examiner	4	
Dallas County EMS	1	1
Black Hawk County Medical Examiner	1	

Total Referrals: 155

Tissue Donors: 26

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/do/medical_examiner.asp



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