

Pronouncement of Death by Housestaff

Recommendations for Pronouncement of Death in Hamilton Hospitals

1. All health workers recognize that prompt pronouncement of death is an important part of overall care of a patient and his/her family.
2. Pronouncement of death is a medical act and must be completed by a physician. It is the ultimate responsibility of the patient's attending physician or the attending on-call.
3. Housestaff working and at times on-call on a teaching service have responsibilities to the care of those patients on their services and this includes pronouncement of death.
4. As physicians present in the hospital after hours, housestaff on-call would consider it a professional courtesy to perform the act of pronouncement of death on non-teaching services. It would be required for the non-teaching service attending physician to directly make the request of the housestaff on-call to perform the act of pronouncement of death. It remains a responsibility of the attending to fill out the medical certificate of death, notify the coroner and make requests regarding post-mortem and or organ donation. It remains also the responsibility of the deceased patient's attending physician or the attending physician on call to communicate with the bereaved family.