

## 5. Completion of Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and Review Process



- 5.1 For deaths which are not reportable to the Procurator Fiscal, or where the PF has agreed that death can be certified by hospital medical staff, a doctor must complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD or Form 11) as soon as possible, following discussion with a senior medical practitioner if necessary. The responsible Consultant (or other relevant senior doctor) must agree the content of the MCCD before it is issued. The certificate must be completed clearly and accurately, and given to the family promptly.
- 5.2 The certifying doctor is required to tick the relevant sections in boxes DH1, DH2 and DH3 on the MCCD confirming the existence or absence of any known public health risks or potentially hazardous implants to the best of their knowledge and belief. See sections 6, 7 and 8 of this procedure for further information on dealing with infection risks, bodies containing radioactive material and hazardous implants.
- 5.3 If a hospital post-mortem examination has been or is to be carried out, the medical certificate should be completed with box PM1 or PM2 ticked to indicate, respectively, whether the post mortem findings have been included in the certified cause of death or if further information may be available later.
- 5.4 In the case of deaths that have been reported to the Procurator Fiscal, the MCCD may only be completed if they are satisfied with the cause of death offered and that it does not require further investigation. In this case the certifying doctor should tick the “PF” box in the MCCD. You must not tick this box if you have consulted the Procurator Fiscal only for advice and they advise that the death is not reportable.
- 5.5 The certifying doctor must follow the instructions in Box 1 (below) to avoid common errors.

### Box 1: Completion of Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

- Ensure that both the MCCD and Record of Issue section at the front of the book are completed.
- Ensure that the dates are correct (DOB and DOD are often transposed).
- Do not use abbreviations or medical symbols.
- Provide proper diagnosis of cause of death, not just symptoms of disease or mode of death e.g. respiratory failure.
- Record the approximate interval between onset and death in **number** of days, months and years. Ticking the interval boxes is not acceptable.
- Provide as much details as possible, e.g. is a tumour malignant or benign; is pneumonia hospital or community acquired?
- Sign the form and write name clearly in BLOCK CAPITALS.
- Write all names in full – initials are not acceptable (including names of places e.g. AMU, RIE, etc).
- Clearly document the certified cause of death in the patient’s healthcare records (see section 5.7).

- 5.6 Detailed guidance is provided in **SGHD/CMO(2014)27 - Guidance for Doctors Completing Medical Certificates of the Cause of Death (MCCD) and its Quality Assurance**. This document can be found in [Bereavement Service policies section](#) of the NHS Lothian staff intranet or on the internet at: [http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO\(2014\)27.pdf](http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2014)27.pdf)
- 5.7 The certified cause of death must be recorded in the deceased person's healthcare records. This is important for future reference and audit purposes, particularly if the death is subject to review by the Death Certification Review Service (see 5.10). A template for standardised recording of death certification on TRAK can be generated using the short code `\deathcert`. This can also be used to send an immediate discharge summary to the patient's GP practice if it is within Lothian. See instructions in Box 2.

**Box 2: Death Certification recording and GP notification via TRAK (within Lothian)**

- In the EPR, select the Correspondence tab and click "New".
- Select an Inpatient Discharge Summary and type the short code `\deathcert` followed by a space. This will generate a template for recording death certification.
- When the template is complete, change the status from "entered" to "authorised" to send to the GP electronically.
- NB. Electronic transfer is only possible within Lothian so GPs outside Lothian will still need to be contacted by phone / letter (see 17. Notifying the GP).

- 5.8 The healthcare professional issuing the MCCD must offer the family the opportunity to discuss the certified cause of death, explaining any medical terms as appropriate. The certificate should be double-checked for accuracy and given to the family in an **unsealed** envelope with details of where and how they may register the death and information about the review process (see below). Staff must record in the deceased person's health records when and to whom the MCCD was issued.
- 5.9 Registration appointments can sometimes be made out-of-hours if there is an urgent need to register the death so that the funeral can take place quickly (e.g. for religious, cultural, compassionate or other reasons). The family should be advised to contact the registration office via the relevant local authority's contact centre.

**Box 3. Emergency out-of-hours numbers for local authority Contact Centres**

- |                             |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| - City of Edinburgh Council | 0131 200 2000 |
| - West Lothian Council      | 01506 280000  |
| - East Lothian Council      | 01875 612818  |
| - Midlothian Council        | 0131 270 7500 |

- 5.10 The national Death Certification Review Service (DCRS) is responsible for conducting independent checks on the quality and accuracy of a random sample of MCCDs. Stillbirths and deaths reported to the Procurator Fiscal are exempt from the review process. See Box 4 (below) for further information about the main types of reviews conducted by DCRS.

**Box 4: MCCD reviews**

**Level 1**

- Randomly selected
- Approximately 10% of deaths (excluding stillbirths and deaths reported to PF)
- Medical Reviewer will check MCCD and speak to certifying doctor (or medical colleague)
- Expected to be completed within 1 working day.
- **Level 2**
- Randomly selected or Level 1 reviews escalated due to problems with MCCD.
- Approximately 1000 deaths per year (across Scotland).
- Medical Reviewer will review MCCD, speak to certifying doctor, review relevant clinical records and may also speak to other healthcare staff and family / carer of deceased
- Expected to be completed within 3 working days.

- 5.11 Random selection of MCCDs for review happens when the details are put into the National Records of Scotland (NRS) registration system. For deaths in hospital when a handwritten MCCD is completed by the certifying doctor, this happens when the informant (usually a family member) goes to register the death.
- 5.12 When a certificate is selected for review there may be a short delay in completing the registration and finalising funeral arrangements. It is essential that any staff who are contacted regarding an MCCD review are familiar with the process and respond as quickly and cooperatively as possible to minimise any additional delays or distress for families.
- 5.13 If the family wish the funeral to take place quickly (e.g. for religious, cultural, compassionate or practical reasons) they may apply for 'advance registration', where the registration is completed in advance of the review process being concluded. Applications for advance registration can only be made at a registration office once a certificate has been selected for review. Further information about advance registration can be found in the leaflet available on the [Healthcare Improvement Scotland website](#).