

Aspirus Emergency System Wide Procedure COVID-19

Postmortem Care of COVID-19 Patient

Approved 04.03.2020 15:00

PURPOSE: To identify appropriate precautions for reducing the risk or exposure of caregivers to communicable pathogens following death.

PROCEDURE:

1. In the hospital the act of pronouncement of death is done by a physician either in person or via telephone. In comfort care and hospice, the registered nurse is allowed to pronounce death per state regulation.
2. If a physician is not present, the registered nurse notifies the attending physician of the cessation of the patient's apical pulse, respiration, and blood pressure and documents in the Interdisciplinary Progress Note. The registered nurse should discuss with the physician who will notify relatives.
3. In the hospital, the nursing supervisor should be notified of the death.
4. The nursing supervisor or hospice nurse should contact the Medical Examiner/Coroner of the death to obtain direction if the Medical Examiner/Coroner will need to obtain any postmortem lab specimens. If the Medical Examiner/Coroner desires postmortem lab specimens the registered nurse may collect nasopharyngeal (NP) and/or oropharyngeal (OP) swabs in accordance with the Aspirus policy "Collection and Handling of Laboratory Samples COVID-19". If lab specimens other than NP or OP swabs are requested, the nursing supervisor or hospice nurse should make arrangements for the Medical Examiner/Coroner to obtain those specimens but should not make arrangements for Aspirus staff to obtain those specimens.
5. The body can be a source of infection, so each body needs to be handled using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and PPE for Enhanced Droplet Precautions should be utilized.
6. The body should be placed in an appropriate, EPA approved, body bag. For in-home deaths, the Medical Examiner/Coroner/Funeral Home will supply a body bag.
7. Remove all tubes, drains, etc. and cover any draining areas with clean dressings unless otherwise directed by the Medical Examiner/Coroner.
8. Place patient identification tag that is labeled isolation or precautionary status as appropriate.
9. While wearing gloves, the outside of the body bag should be wiped down with an approved disinfectant that combats Human Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.
10. Personal belongings, if relatives wish to have them returned:
 - Place clothing in a plastic bag and instruct relatives to wash clothes quickly after arriving home. Do not shake dirty laundry and use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry completely.
 - Wipe down all nonporous items (glasses, telephones, jewelry, etc.) with an approved disinfectant that combats Human Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and place in a separate bag. Instruct families, nonporous items are safe for handling.
 - Recommend shoes be discarded
 - Relatives should be instructed to perform hand hygiene both prior to and after handling belongings.

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11. Transfer body to morgue or identified holding area.
12. Terminally clean the room following established guidelines.
13. The registered nurse should complete all forms required by the state for death notification and removal of a human corpse from a facility

References:

- AWH Policy “Deceased Pronouncement and Disposition Policy and Procedure”
- AWH Policy “Care of Deceased”
- Centers for Disease Control, Collection and Submission of Postmortem Specimens from Deceased Persons with Known or Suspected COVID-19, March 2020 (Interim Guidance)
- AWH Policy “Collection and processing of laboratory specimens COVID-19”