

Practice Education Guidelines for BC Autopsy Viewing

GL#4-2

Practice Guideline

February 28, 2007

Students may be permitted to view an autopsy* as an observational experience IF AND ONLY IF:

- It is a relevant component of their training AND
- The executor of estate (if applicable) consents to the presence of observer(s) AND
- The manager/pathologist responsible for the autopsy consents.

Guideline Details

The Receiving Agency's 'Consent for Autopsy' should include the option for permission of observer(s) to be present.

Roles & Responsibilities

Receiving Agency staff or medical staff are responsible for ensuring the consent policy is followed.

Placing Agency faculty are to ensure that students understand the importance of following the principles of confidentiality and privacy and that they apply even after death.

Consequences of Non-compliance

Observing an autopsy without consent could be considered a violation of the right to privacy and may be subject to legal action.

Rationale

A person is entitled to respect and privacy even after death. Confidentiality and Privacy is just as relevant in death as in living patients. The executor has the right to speak on behalf of the deceased person. In order for an observer to be present at an autopsy, the executor must give consent.

Definitions

Autopsy: "the act of having a post mortem examination of a body performed including the internal organs and structures after dissection so as to determine the cause of death or the nature of pathological changes."¹

References

Pathology Services, Inc. St. Louis, Missouri U.S.A. Retrieved on May 5, 2006 from www.pathserv.com/pathology-definitions.html

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* indicates term is defined under 'Definitions' section

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