

Quick Reference Card for Pronouncement of Death

Adapted from Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center

1. Recognize the extreme emotional significance of the actual pronouncement of death to family members.
2. Establish eye contact with family member(s) present.
3. Introduce self to family.
4. Examine patient for absence of breath sounds and heart sounds.
5. Note time of death.
6. After confirmation of death, verbally acknowledge patient's death to family.
7. Communicate condolences verbally (i.e., "I'm sorry for your loss") or nonverbally.
8. Determine legal next-of-kin from chart face sheet.
9. Ask legal next-of-kin about autopsy, organ donation, funeral home name (consult funeral home information in patient chart).
10. Notify attending MD of death.

Reference:

Lynn J, Schuster J, Kabcenell A. Improving Care for the End of Life: A Sourcebook for Health Care Managers and Clinicians. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.