

Professionalism in Healthcare

Death Confirmation

Before entering the patient's room

- Confirm death was expected and CPR status**
- Check notes for events leading up to death and CPR status

Before examining the patient

You will need:



Stethoscope



Pen torch



Watch or clock with seconds hand

- Express condolences to visitors present
- Explain why you are there and check understanding
- Ask a colleague to escort them to relative's room* or visitors may remain present if preferred
- Infection control – perform hand hygiene & PPE*

*check local arrangements/ policy

**If any concerns or at all unsure ask senior for advice

This poster was designed to complement the NHS Lanarkshire Death Confirmation Video 2023



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Examining the patient checklist

Minimum 5 minutes time with the patient

Unresponsive to voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to the patient 	
Patient identity checked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wristband & board in room 	
No obvious signs of life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect for respiratory effort 	
Presence/absence of pacemaker or other implantable device <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect and palpate • Any implanted device, or the absence of implanted device, should be recorded • If unsure ask senior • Check notes and chest x ray 	

Ensure patient dignity – leave bed neat and cover patient

• Infection control – dispose of PPE and perform hand hygiene as appropriate

No breath sounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • auscultate both lungs 1 minute 	
No carotid pulse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palpate 1 minute 	
Pupils fixed and dilated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check pupillary light reflex both eyes 	
Unresponsive to pain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supraorbital pressure 	
No heart sounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auscultate at apex 1 minute 	

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Once examination complete

Inform nursing staff & allow visitors back in to see the patient

Documentation



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- Time of death as reported by the nursing staff (not when you examined the patient)
- Death confirmation including all contents of the table above explicitly
- Staff or next of kin concerns
- If death to be reported to the procurator fiscal**
- Plan for death certificate completion e.g. after discussion with consultant/ to be done by day team (ensure you hand this over)**
- Implantable devices – document presence of any implantable device including pacemakers. This is essential for death certification and cremation safety**

****If any concerns or at all unsure ask senior for advice**

References

NHS Education for Scotland. (2018). Confirmation of Death Procedure: Clinical signs. Available from: [nes-confirmation-of-death-pocketcard.pdf\(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/clinical-records/nes-confirmation-of-death-pocketcard.pdf)

The Scottish Government. (2018). Guidance for doctors completing medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) and its quality assurance, advice from the Chief Medical Officer and National Records of Scotland. Available from: [00540655.pdf\(222.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/00540655.pdf)

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