

<b>Policy #:</b>	105 (PLH 105-02)	<b>Effective Date:</b>	8/26/2004	<b>Reviewed Date:</b>	2/4/2011
<b>Subject:</b>	AUTOPSY PROTOCOL				
<b>Approved by:</b> Laboratory Executive Director, Ed Hughes (electronic signature)					
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## AUTOPSY PROTOCOL

At the time of pronouncement of death of a patient by a physician, the nurse in charge should ascertain if there is to be an autopsy performed.

Consent for an autopsy must be obtained from the person nearest of kin to the deceased who is responsible for burial \*\* (See below). The attending physician is responsible for approaching the family and obtaining the consent for an autopsy. The consent form, which **MUST BE COMPLETED IN ITS ENTIRETY**, requires the signature of two (2) witnesses. Witnesses and persons giving consent must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. If the nature and extent of the autopsy are to be limited in any way, those **LIMITATIONS MUST BE CLEARLY STATED ON THE CONSENT FORM.**

### \*\* ORDER OF PREFERENCE FOR SIGNATURES

1. Surviving spouse – if married; if spouse is deceased or incompetent, then
2. Parents; if none, then
3. Adult children (preferably the oldest child, but not necessarily so); if none, then
4. Adult grandchildren; if none, then
5. Brothers or sisters; if none, then
6. Nephews or nieces; if none, then
7. Grandparents; if none, then
8. Uncles or aunts; if none, then
9. Cousins; if none, then
10. Step children; if none, then
11. Relatives or next of kin of previously deceased spouse; if none, then
12. Any other relative or friend who assumes custody of the body for burial.

Verbal permission, telephonic or otherwise, by the legal custodian of the body is valid, but consent should be written when possible. If permission is verbal via telephone, permit should be signed for the legal custodians by two professional persons familiar with the patient's care (nurses, attending physician, etc.) receiving verbal authority, with a note on the autopsy permit.

It is always preferable for both parents to give consent for an autopsy on a child, but if one is in the service, divorced or otherwise unavailable, one parent's signature suffices. If the parents are separated, the one with custody of the child has the right of giving consent. If a mother is a minor, she may give consent for an autopsy upon her child, even if she is not legally married. The grandparents should not be asked to do it for her.

**IF CONSENT FOR AN AUTOPSY IS OBTAINED, THE PATHOLOGY DEPARTMENT AND PATHOLOGIST ON CALL SHOULD BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY BY THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR THE CLINICAL COORDINATOR ON DUTY.**

This may be accomplished by calling the Pathology Administration Office at extension 16026 during regular office hours or the main Laboratory Office at extension 16040. The regular hours of the Pathology Department are 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 7:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday.

**No lines, tubes, drains, or dressings are to be removed prior to the autopsy.**

Once completed, signed and witnessed, the consent form should be placed on the patient's chart and the chart taken to the Pathology Administration Office (Main Clinical Lab Office after hours). Security will admit the body to the morgue and the body should be placed in the cooler. The identification band must always be in place to ensure proper identification. As soon as the autopsy has been performed, Pathology will call the PBX operator to advise the autopsy has been completed. PBX operator will notify the funeral home that the body may be picked up. If there has not been a funeral home designated or if there is a delay in the funeral home picking up the body, the PBX operator will notify the proper floor. Orderlies will then be notified and instructed to place the body in the cooler.

Pathologists will attempt to complete routine cases in approximately 30 working days and approximately three months for more complicated cases. The provisional diagnosis, in most cases, will be completed within two working days and sent to Health Information Management and attending physician(s).