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සෞඛ්‍ය අමාත්‍යාංශය சுகாதார அமைச்சு Ministry of Health

DDG - National Hospital of Sri Lanka
Actg. DDG- National Hospital, Kandy
All Provincial Directors of Health Services
All Directors of Teaching Hospitals and General Hospitals
All Medical Superintendents of Base Hospitals
All Heads of Institutions, Ministry of Health

Guidelines on management of dead during current pandemic of COVID – 19

1. If a death has occurred in a lockdown or high-risk area (Not in a health care institution).

1.1 Performing PCR for COVID-19 is a mandatory requirement.

An inquest is mandatory by Inquirer into Sudden death (ISD) or Magistrate depending on the circumstances according to criminal procedure code (CPC).

A nasal/ throat swab for PCR has to be obtained by MOH/ PHI designated health care worker under supervision of MOH of the area. Once the sample for PCR had been obtained at the scene the dead body shall be placed into a body bag under supervision of investigating police officer. The dead body and body bag need to be treated with a disinfectant. Police shall make arrangements to dispatch the dead body to the area JMO with the sample obtained for PCR according to guideline. **Once the dead body is dispatched to the office of the JMO/designated place for storage, the scene shall be disinfected according to respective guidelines.**

1.2 In a case where field PCR is not feasible, the dead body needs to be placed in a body bag under the supervision of investigating police officer. (Police shall make arrangements to transport the dead body) to the office of the area JMO. The dead body should not be treated with any disinfectant. Once the dead body is dispatched, scene shall be treated with disinfectant according to guidelines. Once the dead body reaches the office of the JMO with request for postmortem examination and PCR, the JMO/MO (Medico-legal) or designated medical officer shall obtain necessary samples for COVID-19 PCR and place the dead body in the refrigerator.

2. If death has occurred during the period of quarantine (in Quarantine center or at home – But not in a health care institution).

2.1 Performing PCR for COVID-19 is a mandatory requirement.

An inquest is mandatory by Inquirer into Sudden death (ISD) or Magistrate depending on the circumstances according to criminal procedure code (CPC).

A nasal/ throat swab for PCR has to be obtained by MOH/ PHI designated health care worker under supervision of MOH of the area. Once the sample for PCR had been obtained, the dead body shall be placed into a body bag under supervision of investigating police officer. The dead body and body bag need to be treated with a disinfectant. Police shall make arrangements to dispatch the dead body to the area JMO with the sample obtained for PCR according to guideline. Once the dead body is dispatched to the office of the JMO/designated place for storage, the scene shall be disinfected according to respective guidelines.

2.2 In a case where PCR at the scene is not feasible, the dead body needs to be placed in a body bag under the supervision of investigating police officer. Police shall make arrangements to transport the dead body to the office of the area JMO. The dead body should not be treated with any disinfectant. Once the dead body is dispatched, scene shall be treated with disinfectant according to guidelines. Once the dead body reaches the office of the JMO with request for postmortem examination and PCR, the JMO/MO (Medico-legal) or designated medical officer shall obtain necessary samples for COVID-19 PCR and place the dead body in the refrigerator.

3. If a death has occurred elsewhere other than above two instances (not in a health care institution).

3.1 An inquest is not mandatory for epidemiological purpose of prevention of COVID-19. However, irrespective of an inquest, **a clearance certificate regarding COVID -19 from MOH/PHI should be obtained before the body being disposed.**

If the MOH/PHI/health care worker is of the view that the deceased need to be subjected to a PCR test for COVID-19, an inquest is recommended.

In such instances sample can be obtained as follows,

Nasal/ throat swab for PCR has to be obtained by MOH/ PHI designated health care worker under supervision of MOH of the area. Once the sample for PCR had been obtained, the dead body shall be placed into a body bag under supervision of investigating police officer. The dead body and body bag need to be treated with a disinfectant. Police shall make arrangements to dispatch the dead body to the area JMO with the sample obtained for PCR according to guideline. Once the dead body is dispatched to the office of the JMO/designated place for storage, the scene shall be disinfected according to respective guidelines.

3.2 In a case where PCR at the scene is not feasible, the dead body needs to be placed in a body bag under supervision of the investigating police officer. Police shall make arrangements to transport the dead body to the office of the area JMO. The dead body should not be treated with any disinfectant. Once the dead body is dispatched, scene shall be treated with disinfectant according to guidelines. Once the dead body will reach the office of the JMO with request for postmortem examination, obtaining PCR for COVID 19 is at the discretion of the JMO considering the recommendations of MOH/ PHI of the area.

4. If a death has occurred in a health care institution.


4.1 The clinicians shall decide on investigation for PCR for COVID -19.

Nasal/ throat swab for PCR can be obtained by the ward staff. Once the sample for PCR had been obtained in the ward, the dead body needs to be placed in a body bag under the supervision of nursing in-charge of the unit [according to current guidelines]. The dead body and body bag need to be treated with a disinfectant. Once the body is dispatched to the designated place for storage, the ward shall be disinfected according to respective guidelines.

If an inquest and or post mortem is needed,

Nasal/ throat swab for PCR can be obtained by ward staff. If the sample for PCR had been obtained in the ward, the dead body shall be placed into a body bag under supervision of nursing officer in-charge. The dead body and body bag need to be treated with a disinfectant. The dead body is dispatch to the office of the JMO with the sample obtained for PCR according to guideline. Once the dead body is dispatched to the office of the JMO, the ward shall be disinfected according to respective guidelines.

4.2 In a case where PCR at the hospital is not feasible the dead body needs to be placed in a body bag under supervision of nurse in-charge of the unit [according to current guidelines] and dispatched to the office of the JMO. The dead body should not be treated with any disinfectant. Once the dead body is dispatched, the ward shall be treated with disinfectant according to guidelines. Once the dead body reaches the office of the JMO with request for postmortem examination and PCR, the JMO shall obtain necessary samples for COVID-19 PCR and place the body in the refrigerator.


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