

## DEPARTMENT NAME

Decedent Pathology (Decedent Affairs, Autopsy Service)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Hours of Operation:</b>	Monday-Friday: 0900-1800 Saturday: 0900-1600 Sunday and holidays: Closed
<b>Location:</b>	Room 13-165 CHS (enter from Room 1P-236)
<b>Phone:</b>	Decedent Affairs and Autopsy Service: (310) 825-7846 or (310) 825-6844  Autopsy Reports: (310) 825-6470
<b>Fax:</b>	(310) 794-1116
<b>Key Personnel:</b>	Chief Autopsy Service: Gregory Fishbein, MD (310) 825-2920  Decedent Pathology: Keith Ellis (310) 825-7846  Director of Operations: Alexander Martin (310) 825-5196

## AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

Autopsies are begun daily between 0900-1500 daily, Monday-Friday, except in unusual circumstances. Autopsies are not routinely performed on weekends and holidays. Approval for weekend autopsies may be granted by the Pathology attending "on call" through the page operator (310) 825-6301. When permission for autopsy is obtained or anticipated, the body should be transported to the CHS morgue and refrigerated, ideally as soon as possible after the pronouncement of death. The paperwork, including autopsy permission, should be faxed to Decedent Affairs at (310) 794-1116.

## DECEDENT SERVICES

The Department of Pathology provides autopsy services. The administrative and technical services related to autopsies are managed by the Office of Decedent Affairs.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All deaths in the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center must be reported to the Decedent Affairs Office immediately. The Office of Decedent Affairs assists the

physicians in ensuring the correct and timely completion of all the necessary forms, reports, and documents; acting as the administrative contact for the Coroner's Office, public administrator, law enforcement agencies, attorneys and mortuaries; and controlling access to the Medical Center body holding area and the CHS morgues.

The death certificate is a permanent record of both the manner (natural, accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined) and cause of death. Except in Coroner's cases, the State of California requires a Certificate of Death (State of California Form VS-11) be completed and signed within 15 hours of the patient's death by a licensed physician. The Death Certificate process begins when the patient is pronounced. The physician is required to complete the Death Certificate Worksheet and requested autopsy permission, in its entirety, and fax them to the Decedent Affairs Office at (310) 794-1116. Decedent Affairs enters the information into the California Integrated Vital Records System (CAL-IVRS) and waits for acceptance of the certificates causes of death from the Department of Health. Once approved by the Department of Health, Decedent Affairs will request the Death Certificate Attestation to be signed by the physician; the Certificate will be faxed to the nursing unit where the patient expired for the MD's signature. Immediately after the Death Certificate has been signed by the physician, the nursing unit, or designee, should fax the signed Certificate back to Decedent Affairs. Any delay in this process may hinder a family's ability to schedule a funeral. For further details consult UCLA Health System Policy.

Physicians are encouraged to request autopsies on ALL patients. Requests should be made to the legal next of kin or their designee for all patients except cases involving intrauterine fetal demise.

If the legal next of kin or their designee agrees to an autopsy, the Permission For Autopsy form (form #30903 or 30903A) must be completed and signed by the legal next of kin or their designee and the physician obtaining the permission, as soon as possible after death is confirmed. If the legal next of kin or their designee does not plan to come to the hospital, the permission form for autopsy may be faxed or scanned and emailed to obtain the legal signatures. Located on the Permission For Autopsy form is the "Type of Autopsy" line that must be completed. If the next of kin or their designee does not have any restrictions or religious prohibitions for the autopsy, please check the appropriate box. **DO NOT LEAVE THIS AREA BLANK** or the autopsy will not be scheduled. Once completed, the Permission For Autopsy form must be faxed to Decedent Affairs, immediately, so the autopsy can be scheduled. After faxing, the original Permission For Autopsy form should be scanned into the patient's medical records.

California Law provides that a licensed hospital may permit, and a physician may perform, an autopsy of any remains in its or his/hers custody only upon the prior consent of the decedent or upon receipt of written authorization from a person representing him/herself to be any of the following:

- Surviving spouse
- Surviving child or parent
- Surviving brother or sister
- An appointed individual (the result of the decedent's execution of a Durable Power of Attorney)
- Any other kin or person who acquired the right to control the disposition of the remains
- Public Administrator
- A coroner or any other duly authorized public officer.

The Autopsy Permission Form (form #30903) may be used to obtain written authorization from any of the persons listed above. Telephone consents are not acceptable. Questions regarding whether a person is authorized to consent to an autopsy should be referred to the Risk Management Department (310-794-3500). The RRUCLAMC shall not charge for the autopsy of a UCLA Health System deceased patient. All autopsies shall be considered part of the Quality Assessment and Improvement activities of every Service and part of the continuing medical education programs of the medical staff.