AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 812
(I-19)

Introduced by: College of American Pathologists, National Association of Medical Examiners, United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology, American Society for Clinical Pathology, American Society of Cytopathology

Subject: Autopsy Standards as Condition of Participation

Referred to: Reference Committee J

Whereas, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) decision to remove the autopsy standards §482.22 (d) for hospitals was released in the Omnibus Burden Reduction (Conditions of Participation (COP)) Final Rule on September 26, 2019; and

Whereas, As a condition for Medicare reimbursement, hospitals have been previously required to provide autopsies as part of COP; and

Whereas, The removal of this standard will contribute to the further decline in the national autopsy rate, limiting the contributions to medical education and research that have the potential to affect the quality of patient care; and

Whereas, The autopsy plays a unique and indispensable role in supporting the ability of health care professionals to provide and improve high quality patient care; and

Whereas, Failure to provide autopsies in appropriate circumstances will have an adverse effect on quality assurance and education; and

Whereas, Removal of this requirement, despite other mechanisms for encouraging hospitals to retain their programs, will further erode the national clinical autopsy rates; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association call upon the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to reinstate the Autopsy Standard as a Medicare Condition of Participation.

(Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 10/17/19
RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Importance of Autopsies H-85.954
1. Our AMA supports seeking the cooperation of the National Advisory Council on Aging of the National Institutes of Health in recommending to physicians, hospitals, institutes of scientific learning, universities, and most importantly the American people the necessity of autopsy for pathological correlation of the results of the immeasurable scientific advancements which have occurred in recent years. Our AMA believes that the information garnered from such stringent scientific advancements and correlation, as well as coalitions, should be used in the most advantageous fashion; and that the conclusions obtained from such investigations should be widely shared with the medical and research community and should be interpreted by these groups with the utmost scrutiny and objectivity.

2. Our AMA: (a) supports the efforts of the Institute of Medicine and other national organizations in formulating national policies to modernize and promote the use of autopsy to meet present and future needs of society; (b) promotes the use of updated autopsy protocols for medical research, particularly in the areas of cancer, cardiovascular, occupational, and infectious diseases; (c) promotes the revision of standards of accreditation for medical undergraduate and graduate education programs to more fully integrate autopsy into the curriculum and require postmortems as part of medical educational programs; (d) encourages the use of a national computerized autopsy data bank to validate technological methods of diagnosis for medical research and to validate death certificates for public health and the benefit of the nation; (e) requests The Joint Commission to consider amending the Accreditation Manual for Hospitals to require that the complete autopsy report be made part of the medical record within 30 days after the postmortem; (f) supports the formalization of methods of reimbursement for autopsy in order to identify postmortem examinations as medical prerogatives and necessary medical procedures; (g) promotes programs of education for physicians to inform them of the value of autopsy for medical legal purposes and claims processing, to learn the likelihood of effects of disease on other family members, to establish the cause of death when death is unexplained or poorly understood, to establish the protective action of necropsy in litigation, and to inform the bereaved families of the benefits of autopsy; and (h) promotes the incorporation of updated postmortem examinations into risk management and quality assurance programs in hospitals.

3. Our AMA reaffirms the fundamental importance of the autopsy in any effective hospital quality assurance program, and urges physicians and hospitals to increase the utilization of the autopsy so as to further advance the cause of medical education, research and quality assurance.

4. Our AMA representatives to the Liaison Committee on Medical Education ask that autopsy rates and student participation in autopsies continue to be monitored periodically and that the reasons that schools do or do not require attendance be collected. Our AMA will continue to work with other interested groups to increase the rate of autopsy attendance.

5. Our AMA requests that the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA) and other accrediting bodies encourage the performance of autopsies to yield benchmark information for all managed care entities seeking accreditation.

6. Our AMA calls upon all third party payers, including CMS, to provide adequate payment directly for autopsies, and encourages adequate reimbursement by all third party payers for autopsies.

7. It is the policy of our AMA: (a) that the performance of autopsies constitutes the practice of medicine; and (b) in conjunction with the pathology associations represented in the AMA House, to continue to implement all the recommendations regarding the effects of decreased utilization of autopsy on medical education and research, quality assurance programs, insurance claims processing, and cost containment.

8. Our AMA affirms the importance of autopsies and opposes the use of any financial incentives for physicians who acquire autopsy clearance.

Citation: (CCB/CLRPD Rep. 3, A-14)