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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 1, 2020

TO: NYC HOSPITALS; GREATER NEW YORK HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

FROM: Jason Graham, MD
First Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

RE: DECEDENTS WITHIN HOSPITAL BODY COLLECTION POINTS

The following does not apply to cases under NYC Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) jurisdiction (homicides, suicides, accidents...etc.).

In order to accommodate the special needs of families and the funeral industry created by the surge in deaths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the NYC OCME has significantly expanded our body storage capacity to include **long term storage**. No decedent will go to Hart Island unless the family/next-of-kin (NOK) chooses that option or unless a decedent remains unclaimed. The City will continue to provide burial at City Cemetery on Hart Island at no cost to any family.

The OCME will work with families and funeral homes involved to ensure final disposition as the family wishes, **regardless of the time required** to make final arrangements. OCME will continue to conduct outreach for cases with no known next of kin, if no next of kin is located after a thorough and exhaustive investigation, these cases will be interred at City Cemetery at Hart Island.

The NYC OCME will assist the transfer of decedents into OCME custody for extended storage and release to funeral homes or for City Burial. Proper documentation, body storage and body identification requirements must be met prior to OCME obtaining custody of decedents.

Please follow the guidance below to support decedent transfer to OCME.

All Death Certificates filed by the hospital must be **Registered**. This requires that a **Method of Disposition** be entered when completing the NYC death certificate in the eVital system.

Disposition Unclaimed (Interim Disposition): Cases with no expressed intent or confirmed final disposition arrangements. This includes cases with unknown NOK.

Disposition NOK Request for City Burial: Cases with known NOK that request City Burial at Hart Island

Disposition Claimed by Funeral Home: Cases with confirmed private disposition arrangements (a funeral home has been hired and is claiming the case). This includes cases where a funeral home has been hired but cannot make the removal. Hospitals *will not be able and are not required to edit the death certificate if it has been claimed by a funeral home.*

Death Certificate Field	Unclaimed	Next of Kin Request for City Burial
21a Method of Disposition	Other <i>Then type in: Interim</i>	City Cemetery
21b Place of Disposition	OCME Morgue	City Cemetery at Hart Island
22a Funeral Establishment	Office of Chief Medical Examiner	Office of Chief Medical Examiner
22b Address	520 1 st Ave, NY, NY 10016	520 1 st Ave, NY, NY 10016

Please note that method and place of disposition **MUST** be entered for the death certificate to be registered. *OCME will be unable to retrieve any cases for which the death certificate is incomplete, remaining in draft form, and not registered in eVital.* For decedents that have funeral homes that have claimed the death certificate, facilities do not need to change the Death Certificate for OCME pick up. *Please note that in an effort to facilitate removal of decedents by OCME from your facility, funeral directors are being advised by the DOHMH to file an interim disposition in e-vital when claiming the death certificate so that a disposition is displayed on the death certificate along with the funeral home name.*

Please provide this information to your staff, and should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me with your concerns. Thank you for your cooperation.