

May 2004

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, I have been working with Hospice Minnesota and the Minnesota Medical Association's End of Life Issues Work Group in an effort to address some of the concerns that we as coroners and medical examiners have about hospice, and that hospice agencies have about us. These issues include legibility of forms, legal next of kin, new unrecognized diagnoses, who will sign the death certificate, disposal of narcotic medication after death, a different pre-registration form for each county, etc. I have explained to them that I view hospice registration as a service to the family since otherwise, at the time of death, law enforcement and possibly coroner or medical examiner personnel would go to the home.

Some of the things that different offices have tried include treating deaths at residential hospice facilities as nursing home deaths - that is, they only have to report the death if it otherwise meets coroner/medical examiner criteria; allowing the patient to use a Health Care Directive if the legal next of kin can't be found; and encouraging hospice agencies to be more uniform in their narcotics disposal policies. They would much prefer there be only one hospice registration form used everywhere in the state, similar to the standard cremation form that funeral homes use.

So, borrowing heavily from many of your forms, I came up with a draft form that I have sent to many coroners and medical examiners, as well as to Hospice Minnesota. I have incorporated all the feedback I've received, and at the last Minnesota Coroners' and Medical Examiners' Association Board meeting, this form (**enclosed**) was endorsed. Michael Rossman (Executive Secretary of MC&MEA) has the enclosed form in Microsoft Word format that can easily be sent as an email attachment if you care to personalize it for your own office. Michael can be reached by calling MC&MEA at the phone number listed above, or by emailing him at michael.rossman@co.hennepin.mn.us. I will also be sending the form to Hospice Minnesota in hopes they may eventually have a 'web-based' version.

Please also find enclosed a document I put together entitled "FIREARM MORTALITY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM" regarding recommendations for additions to death certificates related to firearms deaths (other than homicides). Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the enclosed information.

Sincerely,

Lindsey C. Thomas, M.D.

Phone: (651) 480-4253

Email: thomasl@reginamedical.org