

Office of the Chief Coroner
Ontario Forensic Pathology Service

Bureau du coroner en chef
Service de médecine légale de l'Ontario



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MEMORANDUM TO: All OCC/OS/OFPS Staff
All Coroners and Pathologists
Trillium Gift of Life Network

FROM: Dirk Huyer
Chief Coroner for Ontario
Michael Pollanen
Chief Forensic Pathologist for Ontario

RE: Procedure – Declaration of Death and Organ and Tissue Donation

We have provided an updated procedure for use by all coroners and pathologists in Ontario when contacted after declaration of death including when organ and/or tissue donation is being considered. The purpose of this procedure is to: familiarize coroners and pathologists on processes to be followed in cases where there is an opportunity for organ and/or tissue donation; create uniformity and consistency in the approach to these cases; and ensure that Regional Supervising Coroners (RSCs) and Forensic Pathologists (FPs) are made aware of potentially problematic cases for the purpose of providing guidance and assistance.

While we recognize the OCC/OFPS have made great strides in coordinating these cases with Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN), it was important to reflect on the challenges and update the existing policies and procedures to address areas needing improvement. In addition, we have updated the procedure document to ensure consistency in the approach of the death investigation service when death determination is contested by family members or others. Among other items, the procedure:

- Outlines the approach to apparent neurological declaration of death, both at the time when consent for organ donation has been provided, as well as when declaration of death is being challenged by family members;
- Provides step-by-step processes to guide decisions within a context of proceeding with organ and/or tissue donation.;

- Outlines the process for Death Investigations in Non-Perfused Organ Donation (NPOD), and the need for timely involvement of both the coroner and RSC; and
- Reduces the potential restrictions at the time of tissue donation, without compromising the death investigation or criminal proceedings.

Through our collaborative partnership with TGLN, we are confident that we are building an improved approach to organ and tissue donation that will yield better results.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dirk Huyer
Chief Coroner for Ontario



Dr. Michael Pollanen
Chief Forensic Pathologist for Ontario