

SUBJECT: DETERMINATION OF DEATH

Date: 07/01/02

I. **Authority:** Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1798.

II. **Procedure:**

A. When the patient is determined to be "obviously dead," resuscitation shall not be initiated per Policy S-402.

1. The "obviously dead" are victims who, in addition to absence of respirations and cardiac activity, have suffered one or more of the following:

- a. Decapitation
- b. Evisceration of heart or brain
- c. Incineration
- d. Rigor Mortis
- e. Decomposition

2. The prehospital personnel shall describe the incident and victim's condition on the Prehospital Patient Record, clearly stating the reasons that life support measures were not initiated.

B. It is not the responsibility of aeromedical prehospital personnel to pronounce the death of a patient in the prehospital care setting. However, there may be situations where the flight nurse is called upon to determine death on scene.

1. If despite resuscitation efforts, the patient remains pulseless and apneic, for the following type of chief complaint or mechanism of injury, the flight nurse may determine death on scene:

- a. Medical CPR
- b. Traumatic CPR
 - 1) Blunt Injury
 - 2) Penetrating Injury

Approved:



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2. Special Considerations:

- a. In cases of obvious death, a monitor need not be used to determine death.
 - b. If a monitor is used, a patient with a rhythm of ventricular fibrillation requires a Base Hospital Physician Order for determination of death.
 - c. If victims of hypothermia, electrocution, lightning strikes and drowning do not meet "obvious death" criteria, determination of death requires a Base Hospital Physician Order.
 - d. In any situation where there may be doubt as to the clinical findings of the patient, basic life support (BLS/CPR) must be initiated.
- C. When a "death has been determined," no basic or advanced life support shall be initiated or continued.
1. The flight nurse is authorized to discontinue CPR or advanced life support (ALS) care initiated at the scene.
 2. The appropriate law enforcement agency must be notified.
 3. In situations where no other emergency medical services (EMS) personnel or authorized personnel are available, the flight crew will remain on scene until released by law enforcement.
 4. The flight crew will document on the prehospital patient record and the flight record the patient's name, if known, the criteria for determination of death, the time the death was determined and resuscitative efforts discontinued.

Approved:



EMS Medical Director