

# 12.

## MORTUARY/ MORGUE OPERATING PROCEDURES

The proposed procedure is aimed at the safe management of the phases of acceptance, handling, custody, and discharge of the body with suspected, probable or confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 (42). The objective has been pursued by drawing up the following recommendations.

1. The acceptance and handling of the body must be done by personnel equipped wearing the recommended PPE.
2. The body must be positioned on a sanitised metal stretcher for custody and subsequent investigations.
3. At the end of the investigations, the body must be placed in the coffin with the clothes and wrapped in a sheet soaked in disinfectant solution.
4. If the corpse is required to remain in the mortuary is necessary, pending or at the conclusion of the investigations, the same

must take place inside a special closed body bag and dedicated refrigerated room.

5. At the end of the handling and transport operations, all the equipment used must be subjected to sanitisation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUTOPSY INVESTIGATION IN CASES OF SUSPECT, PROBABLE OR CONFIRMED COVID-19

For the safe and effective performance of HG3 (Hazard Group 3) autopsy investigations, is required:

- generic risk assessment and adoption of universal standard precautions;
  - knowledge of possible pathological findings that can be highlighted;
  - the definition of SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) for the management of autopsies with high biological risk.
1. The use of universal precautions effectively protects against most risks related to SARS-CoV-2 infection. Professionals have a duty to carry out risk assessment for each case in order to prevent actions that could put operators at risk (43).
  2. At the end of the autopsy investigations, the body must be positioned in a body bag and transported in a refrigerated room.
  3. Disinfect the outside of the body bag with a hospital disinfectant applied according to the manufacturer's recommendations. It is also recommended in this phase the use of suitable PPE by each operator involved in the movement and exit phases of the body.

### DISINFECTION OF AUTOPSY ROOMS

The following recommendations for disinfection of autopsy rooms should be applied (44):

1. keep ventilation systems active during cleaning;
2. wear disposable gloves when cleaning and handling cleaning or disinfectant solutions;
3. dispose of gloves after cleaning; do not wash or reuse the gloves in any case;
4. use eye protection, such as a visor or goggles, if splashing is expected;
5. if necessary, use respiratory protection based on the type of detergent or disinfectant;
6. wear a long-sleeved waterproof device to protect skin and clothing;
7. use disinfectants with indications of efficacy against human coronaviruses;
8. clean the surfaces and apply the disinfectant ensuring an adequate contact time for effective disinfection;
9. comply with the safety precautions and warnings indicated on the product label (for example, allow adequate ventilation in restricted areas and ensure correct disposal of the unused product or used containers);
10. avoid product application methods that cause the production of splashes or aerosols.

Regarding environmental disinfection, the available evidence has shown that coronaviruses are effectively inactivated by adequate sanitisation procedures that include the use of common hospital

disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite (0.1% -0.5%), ethanol (62- 71%) or hydrogen peroxide (0.5%).

1. Hard and non-porous surfaces can be cleaned and disinfected as previously described.
2. Handle with gloves and disinfect properly after use, equipment such as cameras, telephones and keyboards, as well as all objects that remain in the autopsy room.
3. Cleaning activities must be supervised and periodically checked to ensure that correct procedures are followed. Sanitation personnel must be properly trained and equipped with suitable PPE.
4. After cleaning and removing the PPE, wash the hands immediately. Avoid touching the face with gloved or unwashed hands.
5. Environmental disinfection must include cleaning with water and detergent soap on all vertical and horizontal surfaces, followed by disinfection with hospital disinfectants effective against SARS-CoV-2.
6. For environmental decontamination, it is necessary to use dedicated or disposable equipment. Reusable equipment must be decontaminated after use with a chlorine-based disinfectant. The use of special trolleys is strongly recommended, different from those used for cleaning common areas.
7. The instruments used for autopsies should be autoclaved or treated through chemical sterilisers.