**Medical Examiner Service –**

On the death of their patient, hospital doctors and GPs will inform the independent Medical Examiner Service for their area.

Since 2019 senior NHS doctors have had the opportunity to receive specialist training to become Medical Examiners.

Alongside other specially trained staff, their job is to give independent advice into causes of deaths – except for deaths which must be reviewed by a Coroner.

The Medical Examiners ensure that all deaths are reviewed by someone who is independent and who was not involved in the patient’s care. The Medical Examiner will work with the attending doctors to ensure that the information contained on the Medical Certificate Cause of Death (MCCD), is correct and that if necessary, referrals to the Coroner are made in a timely and appropriate manner to avoid delays.

Medical Examiners and their staff (usually called Medical Examiner Officers) offer families and carers an opportunity to raise questions or concerns about the cause of death of a loved one or about the care they received beforehand.

A key role of the Medical Examiner is to make it easier for the bereaved to understand the wording on the Medical Certificate which explains the cause of death.

**Coroners**

Some deaths must be notified to the Coroner. If a Coroner’s referral is required, you will be informed of this with an explanation as to why. When the Coroner starts an investigation, he or she will then investigate the death independently – although the Medical Examiner may still provide expert medical advice to the Coroner.

Further information in relation to Coroners can be found on the Ministry of Justice website, as the government are responsible for the guidance.

**What questions will I be asked when the Medical Examiner’s Office contact me?**

The Medical Examiner or their staff will explain what is written on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and what it means and will ask if you have any questions or concerns.

They will also discuss the Medical Examiner’s review and ask if there are any concerns or questions about the care the person received before their death. This is the best time for you to raise questions and speak about anything that concerns you.

You will have the opportunity to ask further questions, if you wish to do so. In instances, where the Medical Examiner will not be able to answer your questions immediately, the Medical Examiner will assist in seeking answers, as appropriate, and advise you about sources of additional support available.

**Why am I being asked if I have any concerns?**

A discussion with a Medical Examiner or their staff provides you with the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation with someone who was not involved in providing care to the person who died and to address any worries or concerns you may have.

It could be as simple as helping you to understand more about the treatment and cause/s of death or to understand the medical language used. There may be something about the care which you think did not feel right – this is an opportunity to ask questions.

The Medical Examiner will provide an independent review of causes of death and the care provided. Medical Examiners and their staff will discuss your thoughts, questions and concerns and if they find issues with care that need further investigation will refer these on.

As well as answering your questions, this can help to provide better care for patients, their families, and carers by recognising ways in which care can be improved in the future.

**Can I nominate someone else to talk, if it’s too difficult for me?**

Yes, you can appoint someone else as a first point of contact.

The Medical Examiner or Medical Examiner Officer will usually contact you by phone.

**What if I do not want to speak to the Medical Examiner or their staff?**

Medical Examiners are independent, they will help explain things to you and are specially trained to answer your questions at this difficult time and will be very understanding and supportive of your wishes.

However, we understand this is a difficult time for many people and so speaking to someone is completely your choice.

If Medical Examiners find any potential issues, they will be able to raise these with people responsible for the care of the person who died or refer the issues on to someone who can investigate further.

Speaking with the Medical Examiner and Medical Examiner Officers can help improve the care provided by the NHS to other patients and carers in future.

**What would happen if something was not right?**

The Medical Examiner and Medical Examiner Officers are here to listen to your questions and concerns, provide answers if possible and, if necessary, pass them on to someone who can investigate further.

Medical Examiners will not investigate further themselves, as they must complete their work within set time limits for the death certification process.

**Will funeral plans or release of the body take longer?**

Every effort is made to avoid any delays and work with families and carers to meet the legal requirements for registering deaths and therefore it is not anticipated that the funeral plans or release of the body will take longer.

**What can I do if I have questions or concerns about the Medical Examiner process?**

If you are not satisfied with the Medical Examiner’s advice/service, we suggest you discuss this with staff from the Medical Examiner’s office in the first instance and if you are still not satisfied, you can contact:

The attending GP or hospital consultant who will be issuing the MCCD.

**How can I contact the Medical Examiner office?**

You can contact the West Northamptonshire Medical Examiner office either by phone or email:

Telephone: 01604 523916 or 544518

E-mail: ngh-tr.medicalexaminerservice@nhs.net

Core hours are Monday – Friday, 08:30 to 16:30