

## INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO SET UP A “FAMILY REQUEST/PRIVATE REQUEST” AUTOPSY

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1. Funeral home director/family representative/Coroner/Public Safety Officer or family member requesting autopsy should contact Dr. M. G. Hanly.  
Pager: (912) 280-4339
2. A completed, signed and witnessed AUTHORITY FOR AUTOPSY form, granting permission to perform an autopsy must be provided to Southeastern Pathology Associates (attached). **A signed hospital permit will also be acceptable. If the autopsy is being undertaken as a component of a court order; a certified copy of the court order must be provided.**
3. The body must be moved to the Southeast Georgia Health System, Brunswick Campus, (2415 Parkwood Drive, Brunswick, GA 31520) in accordance with Hospital policies and procedures. The duty pathologist will inform hospital security on the decedent's arrival. On arrival in Brunswick, the Funeral Home Director/Driver should contact the security office at SGHS (912) 466-1161, who will direct the transport to the mortuary entrance and permit admission of the decedent to the mortuary. The body has to be clearly labeled as to name and age of the deceased. The tag should be attached to the right wrist or right large toe.
4. Such medical records and good copies of the records, as may be available, should be provided to the pathologists. Failure to do so will limit the value of the autopsy procedure. **If the autopsy is being undertaken as a “second opinion” a copy of the original autopsy report should be provided if possible.**
5. Charges:
  - Fetal Autopsy (Complete): **\$3000**
  - Standard Autopsy (Partial/Limited/Complete): **\$5000**
  - Exhumation with Autopsy (Partial/Limited/Complete): **\$10000**  
(In cases of exhumation additional charges for pathologist time and traveling expenses will be made.)
  - SEPA can arrange for pick-up of the body at a cost of **\$4.00** a mile to cover transport expenses.
  - Toxicology: These will be charged at rates provided by Pacific Toxicology Laboratories. <http://www.pactox.com/index.php>

**Note: A separate check for \$350 should be made out to Southeast Georgia Health System to cover the expense of utilizing their facilities for the autopsy.**

All autopsy charges (except toxicology) are expected to be paid prior to the autopsy being performed. Payments will be accepted by certified check or credit card.

No guarantee is made or implied that any specific finding will be made during autopsy examination or subsequent histological or toxicological studies.

## SOUTHEASTERN PATHOLOGY ASSOCIATES

### CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION FOR AUTOPSY

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Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, bearing the relationship of \_\_\_\_\_

to the deceased, \_\_\_\_\_, being entitled by law to control the disposition of the remains, hereby request the pathologist of Southeastern Pathology Associates to perform an autopsy on the body of said deceased. I understand that any diagnostic information gained from the autopsy will become part of the deceased's medical record and will be subject to applicable laws. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have regarding the scope or purpose of the autopsy.

#### Limitations:

**None.** Permission is granted for a complete autopsy, with removal, examination and retention of materials as the pathologists deem proper for the purposes set forth above, and for disposition of such material as the pathologists determine.

Permission is granted for an autopsy with the following limitations and conditions (specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Retention of Organs/Tissues:

I authorize the removal, examination, and retention of organs, tissues, prosthetic and implantable devices, and fluids as the pathologists deem proper for diagnostic, education, quality improvement and research purposes. I further agree to the eventual disposition of these materials as Southeastern Pathology Associates determines or as required by law. This consent does not extend to the removal or use of any of these materials for transplantation or similar purposes. I understand that organs and tissues not needed for diagnostic, education, quality improvement, or research purposes will be sent to the funeral home or disposed of appropriately. I understand that I may place limitations on both the extent of the autopsy and on the retention of organs, tissue, and devices. I understand that any limitations may compromise the diagnostic value of the autopsy and may limit the usefulness of the autopsy for education, quality improvement, or research purposes.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

- Note:**
1. Please ensure that copies of all available medical records and details of current medications are forwarded to the Pathologist.
  2. No guarantee is offered or implied that any particular type of pathology will be found.

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## NOTES TO PATHOLOGIST

Decedents Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Points of Interest:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please particularly examine (Detail issues of concern to family):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please take blood for:

Toxicology (Please list drugs of Interest):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please keep tissue for Asbestos Fiber study: \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep tissue for DNA: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXHUMATION AUTOPSY

1. Exhumation and evaluation of buried remains can be a very traumatic event for the family of the decedent.
2. The decision to undertake the exhumation of a deceased person must be made with careful consideration and preferably with the complete agreement of all family members.
3. Exhumation will require official permission.
4. The intricacies of obtaining official permission for exhumation can be explained by the funeral home that undertook the initial burial.
5. After official permission has been granted for exhumation, the funeral home will liaise with the Autopsy Pathologist at Southeastern Pathology Associates to arrange for a date on which the exhumation will occur.
6. The state of the decedent's remains may vary depending upon a number of external factors. Southeastern Pathology Associates makes no guarantee that the remains will be in a sufficiently preserved state to formulate a definitive conclusion as to the cause of death. No guarantee is made that tissue will be sufficiently preserved to obtain DNA or make any definitive findings.

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## AUTOPSY

### Aiding the living by Understanding Death

Most patients enter the hospital to be treated and cured, and happily that is the way it usually turns out. However, some patients die in the hospital or while under treatment at home. Even when expected, this tragic event can leave a family bereaved, confused, and perhaps even angry. Questions may then arise as to what happened; why someone died; was there anything else that could have been done? One way of helping the family to deal with the event and understand what exactly happened to their loved one is through the performance of an autopsy.

*Here are some answers to questions commonly asked about autopsies.*

### What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is an external and internal examination of a body after death. It is performed by a Pathologist who is a medical doctor especially trained in this type of examination and who is able to recognize the effects of disease on the body. Depending on the case, an autopsy takes from 2 to 6 hours to perform. During the procedure each organ is examined in a systematic manner and, where deemed appropriate by the pathologist, tissue and fluid samples are obtained for additional examination. When the autopsy is completed, all organs are usually returned to the body and the body transferred to the designated funeral home. After conducting the autopsy study the pathologist will dictate a report of initial findings (provisional autopsy report). When the microscopic evaluation of tissues and other testing is completed by the pathologist a second or "final" autopsy report will be issued. The autopsy is conducted with great dignity and at all times the deceased is treated with great respect. Correlating all results, obtaining additional opinions and research may take several weeks. Therefore, the final autopsy report may take as long as 6-8 weeks to complete.

### Where are Autopsies Performed?

Autopsy examinations are performed in the autopsy suite. This is a special facility reserved for this task of gathering medical knowledge through autopsy examination. However, if the facilities are adequate, the procedure may sometimes be undertaken at a funeral home.

### Who can request an Autopsy?

An autopsy can be requested by a County Coroner, the patient's physician or by the patient's family. In some cases the patient themselves may indicate their wish for an autopsy during discussions with their family or by signing a personal directive for the procedure. Except in the instance where the autopsy is requested by law enforcement agencies through the office of the Coroner, an autopsy cannot be performed without the signed consent of the legally designated next of kin or other responsible party. When requesting an autopsy the family may make special requests to limit the study to a particular part of the body or even a particular organ which will be honored. In coroner cases a complete autopsy examination will be conducted at all times.

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## Why perform an Autopsy?

An autopsy may be performed for any one of the following reasons:

- To put to rest concerns the family may have over the cause of death
- Define the nature of the disease causing the death of the patient whether it be a malignancy, ongoing infection or other process
- Identify evidence for inheritable diseases that may help other family members seek early diagnosis and treatment
- What is learned through the autopsy performed on one patient may help save the lives of others with similar conditions
- Uncovering or confirming work related diseases such as asbestosis may lead to appropriate compensation to the family
- Provision of crucial information for settling of insurance claims

## Will an Autopsy affect funeral arrangements?

The performance of an autopsy should not, in any way, affect funeral arrangements or viewing of the body. Funeral directors and pathologists have been working together for years and are aware of the requirements each has to complete their task.

## What happens to the Autopsy report?

The report becomes part of the deceased's medical records.

## Can I discuss the Autopsy findings with anyone?

An autopsy report is written in scientific terms. A family often has difficulty in understanding the findings. The autopsy report may be discussed with the pathologist who performed the procedure or with the doctor or doctors that were looking after the patient.

## Are there religious conflicts?

Although some people may worry that the performance of an autopsy may conflict with religious belief, autopsies have been performed on individuals of all religious backgrounds. However, religious decisions are always personal and a discussion with relatives and religious or spiritual advisors may assist in finalizing plans.

## Will there be a charge for the Autopsy?

The autopsy is one of the most expensive medical procedures to undertake. It requires a highly trained physician, technologists and other ancillary staff to complete and a large amount of disposables. A complete autopsy, through to the final report, represents 24 to 36 hours work. Unfortunately medical insurance policies do not usually cover the costs of an autopsy. Autopsies that are requested on inpatients by a doctor are usually performed without charge to the family. Those requested by law enforcement or the coroner are billed to the county, however those requested by the family are termed private autopsies and are billed directly to the family member or the department requesting the procedure. The charge for autopsy services will depend on where the procedure is done and if there is any travel involved.

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### In cases of “second opinion” how will the previous autopsy affect the result?

The best chance of getting the “correct” diagnosis in an autopsy occurs with the first autopsy. Second opinion autopsies can sometimes provide significant, important additional information but until the state of the internal organs have been fully evaluated no guarantee can be made that additional findings, other than those made at the original autopsy will be found.

### How do you request an Autopsy?

To set up an autopsy contact: **Dr. M. G. Hanly (Medical Examiner) 912-466-2758** at Southeastern Pathology Associates. He will provide all the information required to set up an autopsy and assist in scheduling the procedure. A complete set of requirements including permits and detailed instructions for funeral home directors can be forwarded on request.

Information provided by  
Southeastern Pathology Associates  
Full Service Pathology Laboratory  
(912) 261-2669