

Correct completion of a medical death certificate and the selection of the underlying cause of death

Angela Hinds
Senior Technical Officer
Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)

Outline of Presentation



Guidelines for completion of
a medical certificate of
death



Coding of COVID-19 Death
Certificates



Cause of death reporting
reminders

Guidelines for completion of a medical certificate of death

Physicians' Role in Death Certification




*To provide a medical opinion
on cause of death. That is, an
etiological description of the
**order, type and association of
events** resulting in death.*

Physician's Responsibility

- Indicate course of events
- Decide which condition is directly responsible for death
- Determine what antecedent conditions (if any) gave rise to the immediate cause

Cause of Death Sections

Frame A: Medical data: Part 1 and 2

1 Report disease or condition directly leading to death on line a Report chain of events in due to order (if applicable) State the underlying cause on the lowest used line			Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
	  	a		
		b	Due to:	
		c	Due to:	
		d	Due to:	
2 Other significant conditions contributing to death (time intervals can be included in brackets after the condition)				

Part I

- An entry must be placed on Line (a)
 - This is the immediate (final) cause
- Line (b), (c), (d) are due to (or consequence of)
 - Report what gave rise to the line above by asking “*What caused this condition?*”
 - The **underlying** cause is placed on last line and should initiate all above it

Part 1 and 2

	Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
a		
b	Due to:	
c	Due to:	
d	Due to:	




Contributing to death (time after the condition)

Part I

Mode of dying uninformative e.g. natural causes, old age, senility, cardiac arrest and respiratory failure

Report as accurately and precisely as possible. E.g. Indicate if COVID-19 laboratory confirmed

Note that the Underlying Cause of Death can terminate at the Immediate Cause of Death

: Part 1 and 2			
		Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
  	a	Acute respiratory distress syndrome	2 days
	b	Due to: Pneumonia	10 days
	c	Due to: COVID-19 (test positive)	14 days
	d	Due to:	
Contributing to death (time after the condition)		Underlying cause of death	

Time Interval between Onset and Death



**PROVIDES A USEFUL
CHECK ON SEQUENCE OF
CAUSES**



**PROVIDES INFO ON
DURATION OF ILLNESS IN
CERTAIN DISEASES**






**ALLOWS FOR CORRECT
ASSIGNMENT OF ICD
CODES**



**COMPLETE WHERE
KNOWN – EVEN
APPROXIMATELY**

Example

Frame A: Medical data: Part 1 and 2				
1 Report disease or condition directly leading to death on line a Report chain of events in due to order (if applicable) State the underlying cause on the lowest used line			Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
	  	a	Acute respiratory distress syndrome	2 days
		b	Due to: Pneumonia	10 days
		c	Due to: COVID-19 (test positive)	14 days
		d	Due to:	
2 Other significant conditions contributing to death (time intervals can be included in brackets after the condition)		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Underlying cause of death</div>		

Source: WHO Medical certification, ICD mortality coding, and reporting mortality associated with COVID-19
Technical note, 7 June 2020

Part II



All other important diseases or conditions that may have contributed to the death but did not lead to the underlying cause of death in Part I



Enter in order of significance - should represent a direct sequence and be logical



Condition doesn't fit sequence – consider for Part II

Only if they influenced the course of morbid events and contributed to the fatal outcome

Example with Co-morbidities

Frame A: Medical data: Part 1 and 2			
1 Report disease or condition directly leading to death on line a Report chain of events in due to order (if applicable) State the underlying cause on the lowest used line		Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
	a	Acute respiratory distress syndrome	2 days
	b	Due to: Pneumonia	10 days
	c	Due to: Suspected COVID-19	12 days
<div>Underlying cause of death</div>			
2 Other significant conditions contributing to death (time intervals can be included in brackets after the condition)		Coronary artery disease [5 years], Type 2 diabetes [14 Years], Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [8 years]	




Other concerns

Persons with COVID-19 may die of other diseases or accidents, such cases are not deaths due to COVID-19

In case you think that COVID-19 aggravated the consequences of the accident, you may report COVID-19 in Part 2.

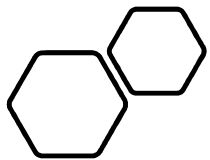
Please remember to indicate the manner of death and record in part 1 the exact kind of an incident or other external cause.

Frame A: Medical data: Part 1 and 2

<div>1</div> <div>Report disease or condition directly leading to death on line a</div> <div>Report chain of events in due to order (if applicable)</div> <div>State the underlying cause on the lowest used line</div>	  		Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
		a	Heart failure	1 day
		b	Due to: Myocardial infarction	5 days
		c	Due to:	
		d	Due to:	
		<div>Underlying cause of death</div>		
2 Other significant conditions contributing to death (time intervals can be included in brackets after the condition)		COVID-19		

The clinical illness and sequence of events leading to death may indicate that even in the presence of COVID-19 a person dies due to other conditions, as in the example above

Coding of COVID-19 Death Certificates



Selecting the Underlying Cause of Death

Underlying Cause of Death (UC):

The disease or injury that started the train of morbid events leading directly to death

or

- The circumstances of the accident or violence that produced the (fatal) injury

NOTE: UC is the primary target for disease prevention and control

The Coder's Responsibility

- To assign the correct ICD-10 codes to all causes of death listing on the Medical Certificate of Death
- Use rules and guidelines to correctly select the Underlying Cause of Death
- **NOTE:** The coded conditions are only as accurate as what has been written on the certificate

ICD-10 Codes for COVID-19

- U07.1 COVID-19, virus identified
- U07.2 COVID-19, virus not identified
 - Clinically-epidemiologically diagnosed COVID-19
 - Probable COVID-19
 - Suspected COVID-19

N.B.: Not U07

COVID-19 Coding Specific Note

COVID-19 is not considered as due to, or as an obvious consequence of, anything else (in analogy to the coding rules applied for INFLUENZA and emerging diseases reportable to WHO).



Further, there is no provision in the classification to link COVID-19 to other causes or modify its coding in any way.

Case 1



F 92yrs		Cause of Death	
Part I. Disease or condition directly leading to death		Duration	
a.	Type 1 Respiratory Failure <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	15 days	J960
b.	Brochopneumonia..... <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	18 days	J180
c.	COVID-19 confirmed <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	approx.3-4 Weeks	U07.1
Part II. Other significant conditions contributing to death			
.....			

GPa: sequence terminating in the first mentioned condition

UC : U07.1

Case 2:



F 65yrs		Cause of Death	
Part I. Disease or condition directly leading to death		Duration	
a.	Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome..... <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>		J80
b.	COVID-19, Pneumonia <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	7 days	U07, J189
c.	Hypertension <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>		I10
Part II. Other significant conditions contributing to death			
.....			

Case 2: Queries



F 65yrs	Cause of Death	
Part I. Disease or condition directly leading to death		Duration
a. Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome..... <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>		J80
b. COVID-19, Pneumonia <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	7 days	U07, J189
c. Hypertension <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>		I10
Part II. Other significant conditions contributing to death		
.....		

GP≠A, GP≠B, R1

UC : U07

Case 2: Corrected



F 65yrs		Cause of Death	
Part I. Disease or condition directly leading to death		Duration	
a.	Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome..... <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	?	J80
b.	Pneumonia <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	7 days	J189
c.	COVID-19 confirmed <i>due to (or as a consequence of)</i>	?	U07.1
Part II. Other significant conditions contributing to death			
..... Hypertension		I10.	

UC : U07.1

Frame A: Medical data: Part 1 and 2				
1 Report disease or condition directly leading to death on line a Report chain of events in due to order (if applicable) State the underlying cause on the lowest used line			Cause of death	Time interval from onset to death
		a	Heart failure I50.9	1 day
	↻	b	Due to: Myocardial infarction I21.9	5 days
	↻	c	Due to:	
	↻	d	Due to:	
			Underlying cause of death	
2 Other significant conditions contributing to death (time intervals can be included in brackets after the condition)			COVID-19	U07.1

GPa: sequence terminating in the first mentioned condition
 UC : I21.9 (Not COVID-19 death)

Source: WHO Medical certification, ICD mortality coding, and reporting mortality associated with COVID-19
 Technical note, 7 June 2020

Cause of death reporting reminders

Reminders

- Use legible writing
- Avoid the use of abbreviations
- Enter details on duration
- Record diagnosis as precisely as possible
- Utilize additional reports: autopsy reports; lab reports
- Give information on disease and the details or circumstance of injury.

- Always have an entry on the first line in Part I
- Use logical sequences in Part I
- Do not place the underlying cause in Part II
- DO NOT report mechanistic terminal events such as cardiac arrest, asystole, cardiopulmonary arrest, respiratory arrest, ventricular fibrillation
- DO NOT report symptoms or signs.

Thank you!

Contact Information:

Angela Hinds

Senior Technical Officer, CARPHA

Tel: 868-622-2152 Ext 40223

E-mail: hindsang@carpha.org

