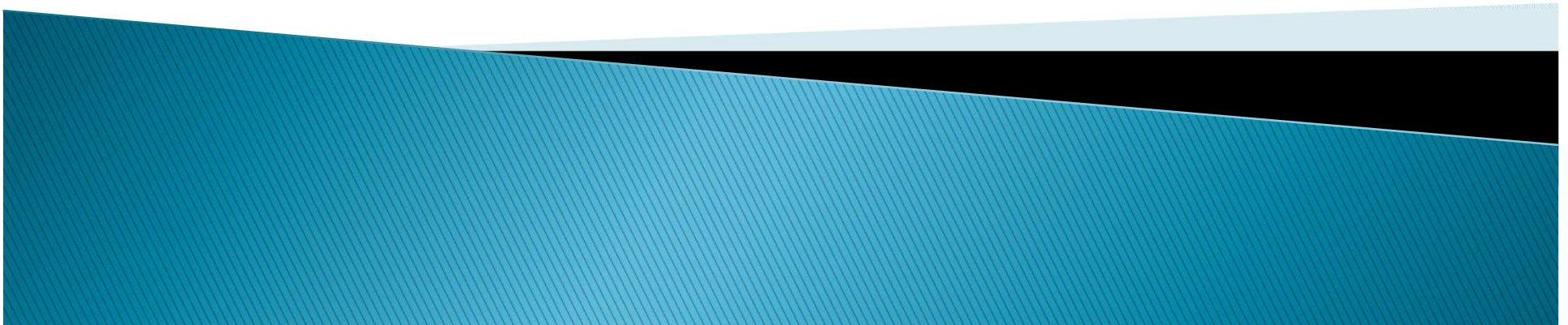


WHAT TO DO AFTER A DEATH

Dr. Fiona Downs
Strathcarron Hospice



VERIFICATION OF DEATH

- 1 Note time
- 2 Examination
 - pupils will be fixed and dilated and unreactive to light
 - no pulsation in retinal vessels
 - absent breath sounds for 1–2mins
 - absent heart sounds for 1–2mins
 - no peripheral pulsation
- 3 Note any unusual features
- 4 Note any drugs– prescribed or concealed
- 5 Straighten body
- 6 Be respectful



CERTIFICATION OF DEATH

- ▶ Complete certificate with particular emphasis on the fatal sequence
- ▶ Ensure histology and primary site are recorded
- ▶ Record the interval between onset and death
- ▶ Do not abbreviate or symbolise causes of death



CREMATION FORMS

- ▶ Complete Form B and arrange for completion of Form C by a doctor who has been registered in UK for > 5 years
- ▶ Ensure no pacemaker or that pacemaker has been removed



RELATIVES

- ▶ Introduce yourself
- ▶ Be practical
- ▶ Expected vs. unexpected death
- ▶ Explain cause of death simply ?diagrams
- ▶ Advise against tranquillisers
- ▶ Encourage company
- ▶ Encourage grief to be expressed



RELATIVES

- ▶ Grief reactions
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Guilt
 - Bargaining
 - Depression
 - Acceptance



BOOKLET

- ▶ Go through booklet highlighting various parts
 - registration information
 - contacting undertaker
 - “What else has to be done?” section
- ▶ Explain you will contact GP/Hospital and will cancel OP appointments and ambulances



RELATIVES

- ▶ Explain the process of grieving
 - initial numbness
 - “up and down days”
 - hallucinations are not unusual
 - times of particular difficulty
 - 6 weeks
 - 6 months
 - anniversaries



RELATIVES

- ▶ Other issues
 - discourage hasty decisions
 - pet problems
 - in practice consider tagging case record of relative with date of death of patient
 - avoid the Black Bag Syndrome



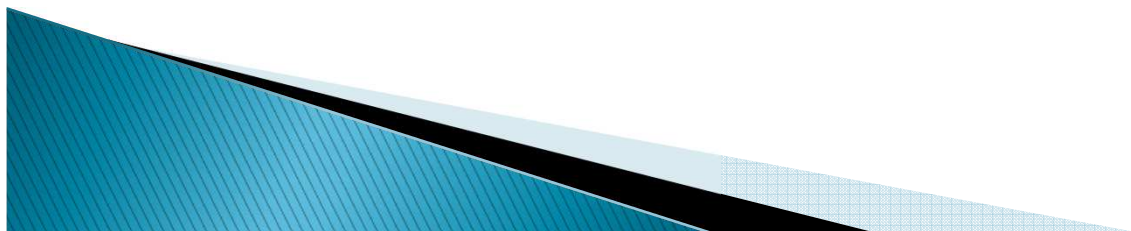
RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Ensure knowledge of and observe the demands of the faith of the deceased person (see Religions and Cultures booklet)
- ▶ Contact the relevant religious leader



DEATH AND THE PROCURATOR FISCAL

- ▶ Unnatural deaths
- ▶ Telephone contact
- ▶ Reporting checklist
- ▶ Police statements – doctors, relatives
- ▶ Post Mortem
- ▶ Crown Office publication



PROCURATOR FISCAL

- ▶ Accidents
- ▶ Complaints –medical negligence
- ▶ Mesothelioma
- ▶ HAI



MESOTHELIOMA

- ▶ Current situation
- ▶ Problems
 - uniformed police
 - occupational history
 - pathology
 - Compensation (Involve Clydeside Action on Asbestos)
- ▶ Possible resolution



DONATION OF BODY TO MEDICAL SCIENCE

- ▶ Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 amending 1984 Anatomy Act
- ▶ patient must request him/herself
- ▶ bodies will be refused if
 - very obese or emaciated
 - distorted anatomy
 - tumour
 - treatment
 - pressure sores or open wounds present
 - infectious disease



POST MORTEM REQUESTS

- ▶ Consented post mortems
 - full signed agreement must be given by relatives
 - relatives can make restrictions
 - relatives should be fully informed
 - “ Examination of the body after death– Information about post mortem examination for relatives” booklet is helpful
 - triplicate consent form

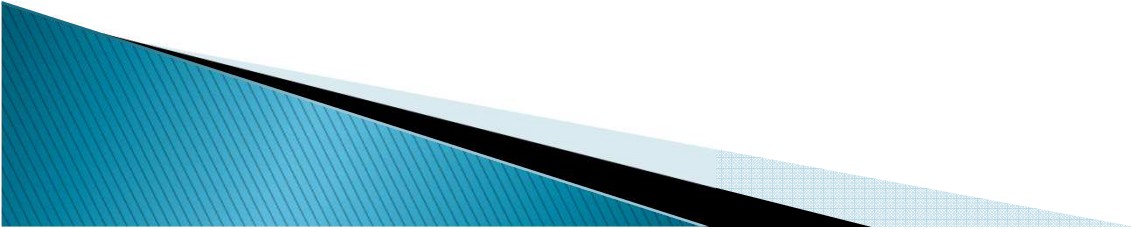


PRION DISORDERS

- ▶ PM in Glasgow or Edinburgh
- ▶ Double body bag
- ▶ Signed autopsy permission form noting the extent of permission
 - diagnosis
 - teaching
 - research
- ▶ Discuss requests with duty neuropathologist



DONATION OF BODY FOR TRANSPLANTS

- ▶ Transplant co-ordinator
 - ▶ Donation of
 - Heart valves
 - Cornea
 - Tendon
 - Skin
 - ▶ Contra-indications
 - medical
 - other
 - ▶ Consent forms
- 

ATYPICAL GRIEF REACTIONS

- ▶ Likely if
 - death is sudden or unexpected
 - unable to view body
 - previous ambivalent / hostile relationship
 - previous loss
 - of parent when a child
 - of fully-grown child
 - few relatives or social supports



ATYPICAL GRIEF REACTIONS

- ▶ Commoner in women
- ▶ Can be prolonged and severe
- ▶ Can present as recrudescence of previous psychiatric problems
- ▶ May require professional help from a trained grief counsellor or psychologist



NO NEXT OF KIN

- ▶ If the deceased had no finances
 - Local council
 - Simple dignified ceremony
 - Burial in common grave unless a family lair is available or deceased expressed a wish to be cremated



NO NEXT OF KIN

- ▶ If the deceased had finances but died intestate (without a will)
 - If there are no known blood relatives, the estate falls to the Crown as ultimate heir (Ultimus Haeres).
 - In Scotland the Office of the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (Q<R) ingathers and administers such property on behalf of the Crown through the Crown Agent.

