

Caring for Orthodox Jewish Patients through a Death

Below is a reference list of things to expect and be aware of in the event of the death of an Orthodox/Hassidic Jewish Patient. The most important points appear in bold, directly below this paragraph, and are explained in more detail in what follows. When available, a rabbi from the Pastoral Care and Education Dept. should be contacted.

Critical Takeaway Points:

- 1. As the patient is dying, all efforts should be made to accommodate the family's rituals where neither other patients' wellbeing nor the functioning of the unit are compromised**
- 2. The physician(s) present should be asked to expedite the death note**
- 3. Leave in place all catheters and in-dwelling tubing in order to permit special preparation of the body for burial. Catheter tubing may be clamped so that the waste bag can be removed.**

While the patient is dying:

- No one including staff should touch the patient if there is no more treatment being administered
- Orthodox Jewish families often want to be present and actively involved when their relatives are dying. This may include trying to make a quorum of 10 men (known as a *minyan*) for prayers at the bedside. Even without a quorum, any amount relatives may be present saying prayers. All efforts should be made to accommodate the family's rituals where neither other patients' wellbeing nor the functioning of the unit are compromised. A rabbi from the Pastoral Care department can assist in communicating appropriate boundaries, when available.

After a patient dies:

- The physician(s) present should be asked to expedite the death note so that the state can compose and release the death certificate as quickly as possible. This will help the family to be able to bury the body within 24 hours, as required by Jewish law.
- Family will typically wait 15 minutes after patient is declared dead before covering the body. During this time, nobody should touch the body.
- Leave in place all catheters and in-dwelling tubing in order to permit special preparation of the body for burial. Catheter tubing may be clamped so that the waste bag can be removed.
- The deceased's hands should be left at their sides, NOT folded or crossed.
- Washing and shrouding of the body will be administered by the burial society before interment
- If in a private room and able male relatives are present, family may place patient on the floor (this custom is rooted in Kabbalistic teachings)

- Sunday through Friday, the body should not be sent to the morgue. Instead, a representative from the Burial Society will remove the body directly from the unit.
- Amputated limbs whether of a patient who has passed or a live patient will be requested by family to be returned as limbs receive burial as well
- If a woman delivers a stillborn, it should be wrapped in a white sheet and be left with the parents if they wish until the Burial Society arrives

Death During Sabbath or Jewish Holidays:

- Sabbath commences every Friday evening at Sundown and ends Saturday evening an hour after sundown
- If patient expires on Saturday late afternoon and is in a private room, the body should remain in the room until after the Sabbath, when the Burial Society can be contacted. Otherwise, the body may be brought to the morgue.
- If the deceased is brought to the morgue, a family member should be allowed to escort the body to the morgue. The patient should be moved to the gurney with lines and catheters left undisturbed (see above). Morgue attendant should supply family member with a chair outside the morgue if family wishes to sit and say prayers
- Patient should not be put in a body bag unless there is a danger to those around