Dead Body Management in the context of COVID-19: protecting the living and respecting the dead

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Disclosure

I declare no conflict of interest.
Objectives

1. To present the available guidance on dead body management (DBM) in the context of COVID-19

2. To discuss the concept of standard precautions on DBM in the context of COVID-19
Introduction

• COVID-19 deaths and mass casualties
• COVID-19 deaths and healthcare systems overwhelming:
  o Protecting the living:
    o health workers
    o personal protective equipment
    o healthcare systems capacity
  o Respecting the dead:
    o community burials,
    o grievance,
    o cultural traditions
Translating the reality ...

8 061 550
Confirmed cases

440 290
Confirmed deaths

216
Countries, areas or territories

... into guidance
SARS-CoV-2 has been detected in respiratory, faecal and blood specimens;  
*Wang W. et al. JAMA 2020*  

Persistence of SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces  
*van Doremalen N. et al. medRxiv 2020*  

**Table 1 – Use of personal protective equipment according to the procedure related to the mortuary management of COVID-19.**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Hand hygiene</th>
<th>Gloves</th>
<th>Surgical Mask</th>
<th>Respirator</th>
<th>Long sleeved impermeable gown</th>
<th>Facial protection(*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing the body inside the isolation room</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of the body from the isolation room or similar area</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortuary care</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necropsies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) – face shield preferred

https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52001
Standard precautions in the context of DBM – COVID-19 (I)

- Hand Hygiene
- Rational use of personal protective equipment
- Safe injection practices
- Sterilization and disinfection
- Environmental cleaning

• “(...) A set of practices that are applied to the care of patients, regardless of the state of infection (suspicion or confirmation), in any place where health services are provided. (...)”

PAHO. Prevention and Control of Healthcare associated infections – Basic Recommendations”- PAHO, 2017 (adapted)
Autopsies and COVID-19

“(…) In this document, we highlighted that post-mortem examination does not have a primary diagnostic role: the diagnosis relies on the clinical picture, the results of laboratory tests (nasal and oropharyngeal swabs aimed at identifying viral RNA with PCR techniques), and typical lung CT scans. Autopsy may still have a clinical role in selected cases, but should more appropriately be restricted to research projects, where the collection of tissues may shed new insights on the disease-induced organ damages. (...)”

Sapino A. et al. Virchows Arch.
Resources


(access date 17 June 2020, 3pm EDT (GMT-4))
Thank you