



PATHOLOGY & LABORATORY MEDICINE

LABORATORY CUSTOMER SERVICE

PHONE

(802) 847-5121
(800) 991-2799

ONLINE

UVMHealth.org/MedCenterLabs

AUTOPSY SERVICE

PHONE

(802) 847-3570

An autopsy is a way of letting the family understand what has happened to the person they love. Giving permission for a postmortem examination is a means of increasing medical knowledge which in turn benefits you, your family, and also the community at large.

When a hospital autopsy is requested, it is because the physicians and the hospital think it is important. At the same time, doctors and nurses recognize that the request for permission to perform an autopsy comes when your thoughts and feelings may be in turmoil. You have just lost someone you love and are unlikely to want intrusions on your grief.

We hope the following information is helpful in answering some of the questions you may have about a hospital autopsy.

What is a Hospital Autopsy?





WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A HOSPITAL AUTOPSY?

A hospital autopsy is performed at no charge by physicians in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine within UVM medical Center. The extent of the examination is determined entirely by the family, often in consultation with the deceased's physician. The organs to be examined are carefully removed and respectfully inspected, with tissue taken for microscopic analysis as well as research and educational purposes.

The final report becomes part of the patient's medical record. A copy is sent to the physicians who took care of the patient, as well as the patient's own primary care physician. The family member who permitted the autopsy will get a letter notifying him/her that the final report is completed. The family member can then discuss the autopsy findings with the treating physician and/or request a copy of the report be sent to them directly.

HOW DO I REQUEST AN AUTOPSY?

Let the physician know that you would like to request an autopsy. You will be asked to fill out and sign a "Permission for Autopsy" form. This form asks you to indicate any restrictions on the autopsy and if you allow the Pathology Department to retain tissue for diagnostic research and educational purposes.

If more time or information is needed to help you make a decision, the Autopsy Service staff is available to help at any time and can receive permission over the phone. The Autopsy Service number is (802) 847-3570.

ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE AUTOPSY?

The hospital autopsy plays an important role in the education of medical students, physicians-in-training, and other practicing physicians. A clearer understanding of the pathologic processes leading up to and at the time of death may significantly aid physicians at all levels to increase their diagnostic skills in order to help patients in the future.

WILL AN AUTOPSY AFFECT FUNERAL PLANS?

A complete examination is compatible with an open casket funeral. Local funeral homes have a very close relationship with the UVM Medical Center Autopsy Service staff, such that an autopsy need not delay funeral arrangements.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL
(802) 847-3570**

WHY WOULD I WISH TO HAVE AN AUTOPSY ON MY LOVED ONE?

Certainly, a sense of grief and shock may surround the death of a family member. However, there may still be questions as to what diseases were present at the time of death, or why death came when it did. An autopsy would address these questions, as well as possibly discovering inherited or familial diseases that may help in the early diagnosis and treatment of that disease in the surviving family members.

The deceased may have wished that others could learn from their illness, and an autopsy would provide that opportunity. The physicians who cared for the deceased may also have questions that could be answered by an autopsy. The autopsy report is placed in the person's medical record and is available to the next of kin.