

# Understanding the Death Certificate Pre-Test

Circle your answer:     Attending     Resident

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following is a sufficient cause of death?

- a. Pulmonary embolism
- b. Cardiac arrest due to pneumonia
- c. ARDS
- d. Type II diabetes mellitus

2. Which of the following is a mechanism of death?

- a. Acute kidney injury
- b. Atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease
- c. Parkinson's Disease
- d. Widely metastatic lung adenocarcinoma

3. An 87 year old woman with Alzheimer's dementia, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and osteoporosis falls at her nursing home and is brought to the emergency room. She is admitted to the hospital with an intertrochanteric hip fracture and rib fracture. She is discharged 7 days later to subacute rehab but is brought back to the hospital one day later with mental status changes and respiratory distress. Chest x-ray reveals pneumonia. She is treated with antibiotics, but in accordance with her previously filled out Advanced Directive, she is DNR/DNI and passes away after several days. What is the manner of death?

- a. Natural
- b. Suicide
- c. Homicide
- d. Accident

4. A 30 year old woman with a history of depression and anxiety arrives to the emergency room after an intentional overdose of acetaminophen. She admits to consuming a large quantity of pills several hours before, with the intention of committing suicide, but then changed her mind and decided to seek treatment. Liver enzymes are sky high, and she is admitted to the medicine service. Supportive treatment over the next week fails to improve her fulminant liver failure, and she is emergently evaluated for liver transplant. Fortunately, a deceased donor becomes available in the next day and she is taken to the OR for liver transplant. As the operation is being performed, she codes and is unable to be resuscitated. What is the cause of death?

- a. Acute liver failure
- b. Complication of anesthesia during liver transplantation
- c. Acetaminophen overdose
- d. Medical complication

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- a. Natural
- b. Accident
- c. Suicide
- d. Undetermined

6. Which of the following is true of a Medical Examiner/Forensic autopsy in the state of Vermont?

- a. Is performed only in cases of homicide or suicide.
- b. The decedent's primary care physician decides whether or not an autopsy is needed.
- c. Consent is not needed from the next of kin for the Medical Examiner to perform an autopsy.
- d. Legally, the Medical Examiner is not permitted to perform autopsies in instances of natural death.

7. Which of the following is true of a hospital pathologist autopsy at UVM Medical Center?

- a. The autopsy is performed at the request of the treatment team.
- b. Consent is needed from the legal next of kin to perform an autopsy.
- c. Is performed only in cases of homicide, suicide, or accident.
- d. Is mandated to be performed in all patients dying not on comfort care.

8. A 50 year old man with a history of traumatic brain injury is admitted to the medical ICU in status epilepticus. He has suffered from grand mal seizures for the past ten years, after he was struck on the head repeatedly with a baseball bat during a fight. The seizures are ultimately controlled, but he remains intubated and sedated. Three days later, he spikes a fever and is found to have a ventilator-associated pneumonia. Despite aggressive care, he passes away. The intern covering nights fills out his death certificate as "Pneumonia due to seizures", with the manner of death as "Natural". What did the intern do wrong?

- a. The ventilator associated pneumonia was secondary to treatment for seizures resulting from a traumatic brain injury, which was incurred during a fight. The manner should be "homicide" and the Medical Examiner should be contacted.
- b. The ventilator associated pneumonia was secondary to treatment for seizures resulting from a traumatic brain injury, which was incurred during a fight. The manner should be "homicide" but the Medical Examiner does not need to be contacted.
- c. The medical term "status epilepticus" should have been used, instead of "seizures".
- d. This death is due to a complication of medical therapy, and should have been written as "medical complications of invasive ventilation".