POLICY: REVIEW AND COMPLETION OF PENDING CASES

Policy:

OCME has a regularly-scheduled mechanism for achieving the target of completing >90% of all cases within 60 days from the date of autopsy. The mechanism includes:

1. a report generated from Case Manager to identify pending cases;
2. a conference of all pathologists to review the pending case list;
3. a quarterly report to determine the percentage of autopsy reports completed within 60 days from date of autopsy as well as the percentage completed within 90 days.

In addition, the Pending Case Conference is a mechanism for:

1. discussing and disposing of problem cases;
2. assessing the quality for autopsy reports (see Quality Assurance program, section A);
3. Identifying systems problems and initiating corrective action.

Procedure:

1. Generating the Pending Case List
2. OCME's Information Technology department generates a list every 4 weeks of cases that are pending. The report is sorted by examining pathologist and includes autopsy date, immediate cause of death and manner of death (if known), status of the toxicology results and the number of days pending at the time the report is run.
3. Each examining pathologist receives his/her list of pending cases from the Chief Medical Examiner.
4. Pending Case conference
5. A conference of all examining pathologists is held daily at 3pm. At this time the cases of the day are reviewed, followed by cases that are pending.
6. Pathologists identity the reason each of their cases appear on the list of incomplete (such as due to pending toxicology report, pending consultation report or police report or medical records, or the case is complete but not finalized in Case Manager).
7. The Chief Medical Examiner monitors which cases are pending and the reason they are incomplete, and tracks the length of time it takes to complete the pending cases.
8. The conference has an educational purpose as well as a quality-assurance purpose because pathologists share information and expertise to assist with completing unusual cases.
9. Completing the case
10. Pathologists amend the DC in CaseManager and put in the final date in the CaseManager case activity summary page.
11. Pathologists submit their signed finalized autopsy reports to the Medical Secretaries as soon as possible for cases with causes of death.
12. Medical secretaries create the Amended Death Certificate, scan all documents related to the case and attach them to the electronic file in Case Manager, and then update the case status to indicate it is complete (confirm the final date is in the case activity summary page in CaseManager).
13. Completed cases do not appear on the next Pending Case List.
14. Reporting the completion rate
15. OCME’s Information Technology department generates a report every three months to identify the days to completion for all autopsies performed in a given month.
16. The report lists month, total number of external and full autopsies, the number completed in each of five categories (under 31 days, 31-60 days, 61-90 days, 91-120 days, over 120 days), the percent of autopsy reports completed within 60 days and the percentage completed within 90 days from the date of autopsy.
17. The Chief Medical Examiner reviews all cases taking >90 to complete to determine if corrective action is required and/or to improve the efficiency of operations.