

SECTION 26 – PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

I. PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS - GENERAL

This Standard Operating Guideline covers all aspects of the Deputy Coroner's involvement with medications from finding them on the scene to their ultimate disposal. Prescription medications found on a death scene can offer many clues about the decedent's medical history, compliance in administering those medications and the name or names of healthcare providers.

II. MEDICATIONS AT THE SCENE

The C/DC will encounter medications prescribed to the decedent, medications prescribed to others in the household, medications for unrelated individuals as well as over-the-counter medications. The C/DC shall make every effort to locate and secure all prescription medications that belong to the decedent. Prescription containers should be observed for approximate expected balance of the medication base on prescription fill date, dosage instruction and the date of death. The names of the various prescriptions should be noted and compared to the medical history reported by next of kin or other bystanders at a scene. Prescriptions should be packaged and taken from the scene by the C/DC. Those medications shall be accurately counted and reported on a Medication Log/ROD and made part of the case folder.

The C/DC should also examine medications prescribed to other household members. Prescription containers should be observed for approximate expected balance of the medication base on prescription fill date, dosage instruction and the date of death. If the death appears to be related to overuse of medications, those medications must not be removed from the scene but must be counted for reporting purposes. Clear images of the medication label should be taken. This information shall be included on the Medication Log.

Medications not belonging to either the decedent or any household member should be located, secured and removed from the scene. Those medications must become part of the Medication Log.

The C/DC should make note of any over-the-counter medications for the Report of Death. Holistic or natural remedies should be noted as well.

III. RECONCILING MEDICATIONS

All medications removed from a death scene shall be inventoried and recorded on a Medication Log. Irregularities should be acknowledged in the "Notes" section of the log. Medications should be reconciled prior to completing the ROD in order that the C/DC gain a more complete knowledge of all the scene circumstances. Medications taken from a scene shall be securely maintained at all times and be delivered to the Shelby County Coroner's Office at the earliest convenience.

IV. RETENTION OF MEDICATIONS

Medications shall be maintained in a locking device approved by the Shelby County Coroner. Medications shall be logged in on a form approved by the Shelby County Coroner. Medications shall be maintained for a minimum of 10 days from date of death. Longer retention periods shall be considered for medications from scenes where criminal activity is suspected or when requested by the forensic pathologist. The pharmacies listed on the medication should be called and notified that the person is deceased.

V. DISPOSAL OF MEDICATIONS

Once the retention period has expired, medications must be disposed. All medications shall be compared to the log. Any discrepancies must be immediately brought to the attention of the Shelby County Coroner.