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Dear Colleague

REVISED MCCD FORMS (FORM 11) AND ELECTRONIC COMPLETION

Purpose

1. To inform you about the implementation of the new Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) forms by National Records of Scotland (NRS) on 6 August 2014. After midnight on the evening of 5 August 2014, existing MCCD forms will no longer be valid and acceptable. Incompletely filled forms will also not be accepted by the registrar and will be returned. **It is therefore of vital importance that all doctors are aware of the content of this letter and take forward the actions set out in paragraph 12 below.**

Background

2. Death certification serves a number of functions. A Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), provided to the best knowledge and belief of the medical practitioner, is a statutory requirement. Following a death the informant, who is the person who registers the death, and who may or may not be the next of kin, is provided with the MCCD to take to the registrar's office to register the death. The MCCD provides a permanent legal record of the fact of death. It allows the family to register the death, enabling the disposal of the body and settlement of the deceased's estate. Timely and accurate completion of MCCDs reduces undue additional distress at a difficult time for families.

3. More generally, information from MCCDs is used to measure the relative contributions of different diseases to mortality in Scotland. Statistical information on deaths by **underlying cause** is important for monitoring the health of the population, designing and evaluating public health interventions, recognising priorities for medical research and health services, planning health services, and assessing the effectiveness of those services. Data from the MCCDs are used extensively in research into the health effects of exposure to a wide range of risk factors through the environment, work, medical and surgical care, and other sources.

**From the Acting Chief
Medical Officer
Dr Aileen Keel CBE**

25 June 2014

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For action

- Medical Directors, NHS Boards
To be cascaded to all doctors.
- NHS Board Local
Implementation Leads for Death
Certification

For information

NHS Chief Executives (including
Special Boards)
NHS Board Chairs
NHS Board Directors of Public Health
Directors of Nursing
Heads of Midwifery
Hospices
Private Healthcare Providers
Crown Office Procurator Fiscal
Service
NHS Board Primary Care Leads
NHS Bereavement Coordinators
BMA
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MPS
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GMC
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
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Police Scotland

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4. The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (Form 11) was last prescribed by NRS in 1998, under the Registration of Births, Still-births, Deaths and Marriages (Prescription of Forms) (Scotland) Regulations 1997. Following recent consultation, NRS is introducing a new MCCD form, which will come into force on 6 August 2014.

Changes in the MCCD

5. The layout of the new MCCD has been improved for ease of completion. It will be a double-sided form in 5 sections (A to E).

The main changes are:

- The deceased person's Community Health Index (CHI) Number is now required. The CHI Number will help to distinguish between 2 patients with the same name and date of birth; will provide more accurate demographic information; and will improve the management of patient records.
- The inclusion of the name of the Health Board area where death occurred, which will facilitate statistical analysis by Health Board area.
- The certifying doctor's General Medical Council reference number has been added to make it easier to identify the certifying doctor.
- The inclusion of the certifying doctor's business contact telephone number, to help colleagues such as the registrar contact them where necessary to clarify the content of the MCCD.

6. In addition to these changes, the Form 11 has been revised to assist in the implementation of certain provisions of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011, which is due to be implemented in April 2015. The MCCD now requires the certifying doctor to confirm, to the best of their knowledge and belief, whether there are any public health risks associated with the body of the deceased, and whether the body contains any potentially hazardous devices such as pacemakers or other implants to be removed and disposed of safely before cremation.

7. This public health information is currently provided by doctors on Cremation Forms B and C, prescribed by the Cremation (Scotland) Regulations 1935. These forms will no longer exist once the relevant parts of the 1935 Regulations are repealed in April 2015. As a result it is envisaged that the public health information contained on the MCCD will in future be transferred onto the Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) by the registrar (with this form being re-prescribed prior to April 2015). The combination of the Forms 11 and 14 will therefore replace the existing Cremation forms, and will ensure the continued protection of individuals handling the body, such as funeral directors and burial and crematoria staff.

8. For clarity, at the point of the introduction of the new MCCD in August, there will be **no changes** in 2 specific areas:

- Cremation forms B and C will continue to be required until the implementation of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 by April 2015. (This means that for the period between August 2014 and April 2015 some information will need to be duplicated on both the new MCCD and forms B and C.)
- Stillbirth forms remain the same at the present time but may change in the future. Notification will be provided about any changes to these forms at the appropriate time.

Next steps: Electronic completion of MCCD

9. IT systems are being developed to enable doctors to complete the new MCCD electronically. This will reduce inadvertent errors as key information regarding the deceased will be automatically populated. This should also reduce the workload in completing the forms. This initiative will be rolled out to GP practices initially, involving GP IT systems, and subsequently in other settings such as hospitals.

10. However, even where electronic completion of the MCCD is in place, a paper copy of the MCCD will still be required to be printed, signed and given to the informant as the means of attestation remains a signature on paper. Hard copies of the new MCCD Forms in the established format of books of 20 will be printed by NRS and distributed via the certification of death local Implementation Leads to replace current paper MCCD Forms in time for the changeover.

11. The intention eventually is to transfer all completed MCCDs electronically to the registrar (from NHS IT to NRS IT systems). Work is underway to implement this functionality. Consideration is being given to changing the manner of attestation so that electronic attestation is possible in the future.

Action

12. Key actions should now be taken forward as follows:

- Certifying doctors should familiarise themselves with the new MCCD forms and be supported to access the attached training below developed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES).
- [http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/medicine/about-medical-training/generic-training/support-of-national-training/the-certification-of-death-\(scotland\)-act-2011-education-and-learning-resources.aspx](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/medicine/about-medical-training/generic-training/support-of-national-training/the-certification-of-death-(scotland)-act-2011-education-and-learning-resources.aspx)
- These educational resources comprise a leaflet, a poster and presentation. The leaflet and poster are in MS Word format to enable Local Implementation Leads to personalise them with their individual Board logo and contact details.
- **All training should be completed in advance of medical staff certifying deaths after midnight on 5 August.**
- Training should also be available for changeover medical staff in November 2014 and for all new staff before January 2015, when the NES materials to support the implementation of the new scrutiny system will become available
- The old-style (currently in use) MCCDs form should not be used from 6 August 2014 (i.e. from midnight and afterwards on 5 August 2014).
- NHS Boards should ensure that all the old-style (currently in use) MCCD forms are destroyed and disposed of as clinical confidential waste once they are no longer needed, to prevent fraud.
- Old-style (currently in use) MCCD forms completed for deaths up to midnight 5 August 2014 will be accepted by NRS for processing for a period of up to 2 weeks, as the informant can register the death normally up to 8 days after death.
- Deaths after midnight on 5 August 2014 (that is, in the early morning of 6 August 2014) should only be recorded on the new style MCCD forms. Registrars will be unable to register deaths from 6 August 2014 that have been certified on the old style (currently in use) MCCD forms.
- In the event of a bereaved family being provided with an old-style MCCD form after 6 August, and this being rejected by registrars, a new style MCCD will have to be completed. In these circumstances the new-style MCCD can be considered as a

“new” MCCD (not a duplicate of the old-style MCCD, as the old-style MCCD will not be a legal document). This means, the new style MCCD can be completed by any doctor with access to the patient’s records or with knowledge of the patient, including the doctor who certified the death on the rejected old-style MCCD.

- In order to minimise distress and delay to the bereaved as a result of any incorrect use of the old-style MCCD, NHS Implementation Leads should ensure that local registrars have a contact number of an appropriate person in the NHS Board or local hospitals who can assist in replacing the rejected, old-style MCCD. Every effort should be made to support bereaved families during the transition to the new MCCD.
- Additional supplies of new MCCD forms – over and above those which will be provided automatically – can be requested directly from NRS (e-mail: lou@gro-scotland.gsi.gov.uk, telephone: 0131 314 4462) or via the local registration office who will forward the request to NRS.
- As the ‘cause of death’ section in the MCCD forms has not changed, and the section related to hazards is similar to the requirement in the current cremation forms, updated detailed Scottish Government guidance for certifying doctors on how to complete the new MCCD will be available later this year. The current guidance is available through the attached link. [www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO\(2009\)10.pdf](http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2009)10.pdf)
- This guidance will also detail the new independent scrutiny and quality assurance system. This new system of scrutiny by independent Medical Reviewers is being implemented by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and is anticipated to be in place by April 2015.

Conclusion

13. It is absolutely vital that the NHS is ready to transition to the new format of the MCCD. Inadvertent use of the wrong version of the form may cause delays and distress to bereaved families and next of kin. I would therefore be grateful for your urgent attention to this letter, and for the necessary actions set out above to be taken forward as a matter of the highest priority.

Yours sincerely

Aileen Keel

DR AILEEN KEEL CBE