



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTERNAL MEMO: MEDICAL CERTIFICATION FOR DEATH DUE TO COVID-19

Date:	4 June 2020		
To:	Minister ZL Mkhize, Honorable Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION FOR DEATH DUE TO COVID-19

Problem statement

Mortality due to COVID-19 is an important population-based measure of the epidemic. When testing for SARS-CoV-2 is constrained, death notification becomes even more important. To obtain high quality death information, clinicians need to be aware of their obligations under law¹ to report accurate causes of death on the South African death notification form. A guideline is needed to provide standardized guidance to clinicians reporting deaths associated with Covid-19.

Points for consideration:

The WHO has recently provided international guidelines on the medical certification of cause of death due to COVID-19.² This indicates that COVID-19 should be recorded on the medical certificate of cause of death for ALL decedents where COVID-19 caused, or is assumed to have caused, or contributed to death.

Clinicians are bound by law to report COVID-19 as a cause of death in cases where this has been confirmed, as well as in cases where, in their opinion this is the most probable cause of death, even if a test result is not available to confirm this.

A guideline document for Medical Certification for death due to COVID-19, (*see Guideline for Medical Certification for death due to COVID-19*). The guideline includes case definitions for a confirmed COVID-19 case, a probable case of COVID PUI, and a suspected case.

Recommendations

It is recommended that this guideline be made into a NDoH guideline document and implemented to ensure that mortality due to COVID-19 can be appropriately captured to effectively measure this epidemic in South Africa.

(*See Guideline for Medical Certification for death due to COVID-19*)

¹ Births and deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992.

² WHO, 2020. International guidelines for certification and classification of COVID-19 as a cause of death.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this advisory from the MAC on COVID-19.

Kind regards,



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OVERARCHING CHAIRPERSON: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 4 June 2020

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General: National Health Insurance)**
- » **Dr S Zungu (Project Lead: Sectoral Response to Covid-19)**
- » **Ms R Pretorius-Ngobeni (Secretariat: Implementation Management Team)**