

Determination of Death/Withholding Resuscitative Efforts

Aliases

None noted

Patient Care Goals

All clinically dead patients will receive all available resuscitative efforts including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) unless contraindicated by one of the exceptions defined below

Patient Presentation

A clinically dead patient is defined as any unresponsive patient found without respirations and without a palpable carotid pulse

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:

1. Resuscitation should be started on all patients who are found apneic and pulseless unless the following conditions exist (does not apply to victims of lightning strikes, drowning, or hypothermia):
 - a. Medical cause or traumatic injury or body condition clearly indicating biological death (irreversible brain death), limited to:
 - i. Decapitation: the complete severing of the head from the remainder of the patient's body
 - ii. Decomposition or putrefaction: the skin is bloated or ruptured, with or without soft tissue sloughed off. The presence of at least one of these signs indicated death occurred at least 24 hours previously
 - iii. Transection of the torso: the body is completely cut across below the shoulders and above the hips through all major organs and vessels. The spinal column may or may not be severed
 - iv. Incineration: 90% of body surface area with full thickness burns as exhibited by ash rather than clothing and complete absence of body hair with charred skin
 - v. Injuries incompatible with life (such as massive crush injury, complete exsanguination, severe displacement of brain matter)
 - vi. Futile and inhumane attempts as determined by agency policy/protocol related to "compelling reasons" for withholding resuscitation
 - vii. In blunt and penetrating trauma, if the patient is apneic, pulseless, and without other signs of life upon EMS arrival including, but not limited to spontaneous movement, EKG activity, or pupillary response
 - viii. Nontraumatic arrest with obvious signs of death including dependent lividity or rigor mortis

OR

- b. A valid DNR order (form, card, bracelet) or other actionable medical order (e.g., Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)/Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form) is present, and it:
 - i. Conforms to the state specifications for color and construction
 - ii. Is intact: it has not been cut, broken, or shows signs of being repaired
 - iii. Displays the patient's name and, if required by state law or regulation, the physician's name