

SAQ 9

A 24 year old woman has just died in your ED despite active resuscitation after sustaining massive head injuries in a motor vehicle accident. Police are in attendance but her family members are unaware of the situation.

a) How will you break the news to the family? (6 marks)

Answer:

Do not tell them over the phone

Say relative is unwell and they need to attend urgently

- On arrival, greet in person
- Delegate other roles so you will be uninterrupted
- Have another staff member present
- Introduce yourself and confirm identity and relationship to deceased of all present
- Summarise what has happened and state that the patient has died
- Do not use euphemisms
- Allow whatever form of grief reaction occurs the time and space needed
- Ask for and answer questions
- Allow viewing of body
- Use touch to comfort if appropriate
- Offer food and drink
- Give access to telephone
- Offer pastoral care referral

b) In what circumstances must a death be reported to the coroner? (4 marks)

ANSWER: pass/fail - Where there is any suspicion the death is not from natural causes

Additional material (may vary from state to state)

The term "reportable death" means a Western Australian death –

(a) that appears to have been unexpected, unnatural or violent or to have resulted, directly or indirectly, from injury;

(b) that occurs during an anaesthetic;

(c) that occurs as a result of an anaesthetic and is not due to natural causes;

(d) of a person who immediately before death was a person held in care

(f) that appears to have been caused or contributed to while the person was held in care:

that appears to have been caused or contributed to by any action of a member of the Police Force;

(h) of a person whose identity is unknown;

- (i) that occurs in Western Australia where the cause of death has not been certified under section 44 of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998;
- (j) that occurred outside Western Australia where the cause of death is not certified to by a person who, under the law in force in that place, is a legally qualified medical practitioner.