

SAQ 1

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.

1. 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.