

WHAT IS AN AUTOPSY?

An autopsy is an external and internal examination by which a board-certified pathologist may evaluate the human body after death. This includes an examination of visible parts of the body as well as the internal organs and tissues supporting the body.

Autopsies may be comprehensive or limited by restrictions determined by the families. These restrictions may limit the examination to specific body cavities or organs based on preferences or according to the questions to be answered.

Small portions of each organ are transferred onto microscope slides that allow the pathologist to examine the tissues at the cellular level to search for disease processes and malignancies. Other samples may be submitted for chemical and biological testing. Some organs and tissues are retained for further sampling and educational purposes.

In nearly all cases, no visible evidence of the examination can be detected during funeral services.

The autopsy report, which is sent to the physician signing the death certificate and a primary care physician if identified, contains information such as identification of conditions directly leading to death, conditions underlying but not contributing to death, incidental conditions, details about disease processes, and review of the autopsy findings with the clinical history.

Mortui Vivos Docent

The Dead Teach The Living

OSUWMC Pathologists perform an in-depth review of medical records prior to autopsy and may need to make a referral to the County Coroner. Sometimes the coroner assumes jurisdiction but will not do an autopsy. If this happens and the legal next-of-kin would like an autopsy, he/she/they may contact the Regional Autopsy Center.

Occasionally, the Coroner's office will have an OSUWMC inpatient brought to their facility but will only perform an external exam. If the family still desires an autopsy, the decedent will need to be brought back to the OSUWMC Regional Autopsy Center. Transportation costs from the Coroner's Office to OSUWMC are at the expense of the family.

Please contact the OSUWMC Regional Autopsy Center with questions.

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
Davis Heart & Lung Research Institute, Room 081
473 West 12th Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43210
Phone: 614-247-7485
Fax: 614-685-4167
Email: autopsy@osumc.edu
Website:
<https://pathology.osu.edu/services/autopsyservices.html>



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**REGIONAL
AUTOPSY
CENTER
(RAC)**



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The Board-Certified Pathologists and Staff of the Regional Autopsy Center Represent OSUWMC in its Mission, Vision, Values, and Promise to Communities throughout the Buckeye State

WHY ARE AUTOPSIES IMPORTANT?

Autopsies are important to families, physicians, communities, and medical facilities for many reasons:

Additional Information – may answer questions, give a more complete picture of disease processes and explain cause of death; clinical and autopsy findings are reviewed together

Genetic Conditions – may provide information about genetic conditions that warrant testing of family members for early diagnosis and treatment

Quality Tool – provides information to the medical center and doctors regarding the effectiveness of diagnostic techniques and therapeutic interventions

Education – medical professionals at all levels benefit from autopsies as they are able to experience the effects of diseases first-hand

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT MY FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS?

In nearly all cases, the autopsy will not interfere with funeral arrangements or viewing in any way.

WHO CAN REQUEST AN AUTOPSY?

Any family member of the deceased may request an autopsy, but we will only move forward with the written consent of the legal next-of-kin. Guardianship and power-of-attorney (POA) end upon death. In Ohio, the order of the legal next-of-kin is:

- Spouse (even if separated)
- Adult children (all)
- Parents (both)
- Adult siblings (all)
- Grandparents (all)
- Lineal descendents of grandparents

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEDICAL AND FORENSIC AUTOPSIES?

Medical autopsies are performed by anatomic pathologists. They evaluate disease processes from a medical perspective. This DOES NOT include information about manner of death, matters of negligence or malpractice, or non-natural events.

Forensic autopsies are performed by pathologists specialized in forensics and often work for government agencies such as Coroner's Offices. They are trained to evaluate non-natural events leading to death such as homicide, suicide, accidental deaths, etc. OSU pathologists do not perform forensic autopsies.



HOW MUCH DOES AN AUTOPSY COST?

There is no charge to the families of patients who pass while admitted to an OSU facility, or patients who were admitted within the last two years but pass outside of OSU. However, if the patient passes outside OSU, transportation charges to/from our facility may apply.

Those requesting an autopsy on non-OSU patients may call our office (614-247-7485) or visit our website for fees.

<https://pathology.osu.edu/services/autopsyservices.html>

HOW CAN I RECEIVE A COPY OF THE AUTOPSY REPORT?

Families of OSU patients and patients of other medical facilities are encouraged to speak with the patient's physicians about autopsy results. They may also request copies of the reports from the OSUWMC Medical Information Management Department (614-293-8657, listen to all options before selecting).

Families privately funding the autopsy will receive both the Preliminary (typically within one week) and Final (typically within sixty days) Autopsy reports

