

Coroners Society of Ireland

Modified Requirements for Death Pronouncement during Covid-19 Pandemic

The pronouncement of death is a clinical practice requirement and is not provided for in legislation.

To date the coroner has relied on a medical doctor to satisfy themselves that a person reported to them is deceased.

During the current Covid -19 outbreak the needs of the living may need to be prioritised.

In this pandemic Covid -19 scenario the coroners will accept a competent, trained person pronouncing expected death if a doctor is unavailable. This could be a senior nurse in a long term care facility, public health nurse, palliative care nurse appropriately trained or a paramedic if available in the community for example. However death pronouncement may need to be by whatever means are available as the situation evolves.

Identifying such persons and matters in relation to what constitutes an examination for the purpose of pronouncing death are for the competent healthcare authority.

Nothing in the above policy alters the requirement for formal death pronouncement by a doctor in an unexpected death.

Notification to the coroner and certification of the cause of death by the treating doctor, where applicable, will proceed in the usual manner.

This policy will be kept under active review.

March 26th 2020

Dr Mary Flanagan

President of the Coroners Society of Ireland