

DEATH CERTIFICATES

The “Cause of Death” section (Box 28, Part I) of the death certificates should be completed using a “due to” hierarchy (i.e. Line a due to Line B due to Line C). Other significant conditions (Box 28, Part II) should be completed when other significant conditions contributed to death but are unrelated to Part I. The “Cause of Death” section should not be a list of all the decedent’s medical diagnoses and should not include mechanisms of death. “Cardiac arrest”, “cardiopulmonary failure”, “metabolic derangement”, etc. should not be included in the cause of death statement as they reflect terminal events and mechanisms of death.

Acceptable examples of natural* causes of death:

- Advanced age (Acceptable, but more specific is preferred)
- Cerebrovascular accident due to atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease
- Coronary artery disease
- Ischemic heart disease
- Metastatic lung adenocarcinoma to liver and brain
- Myocardial infarction due to hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease
- Renal failure due to diabetes
- Ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm
- Sequelae of dementia due to probable Alzheimer’s Disease
- Sepsis due to pneumonia due to chronic alcoholism
- Sepsis due pneumonia due to cystic fibrosis

*All non-natural causes of death should be referred to the MEO for completion of the death certificate.

Not Acceptable: *The causes below must all be more specific or due to something.*

- Aspiration pneumonia (Acceptable: Aspiration pneumonia due to chronic alcoholism)
- Atrial fibrillation (Acceptable: Atrial fibrillation due to atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease)
- Cardiac disease (Acceptable: Hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease)
- Cardiomyopathy (Acceptable: Dilated cardiomyopathy due to chronic alcoholism)
- Cerebrovascular accident (Acceptable: Cerebrovascular accident due to hypertensive cardiovascular disease)
- Cirrhosis (Acceptable: Cirrhosis due to chronic alcoholism)
- Congestive heart failure (Acceptable: Congestive heart failure due to hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease)
- Dementia (Acceptable: Sequelae of dementia of unknown type; Failure to thrive due to dementia due to probable Alzheimer’s disease”)
- Failure to thrive (Acceptable: Failure to thrive due to advanced age)

- Immunocompromised state (Acceptable: Sepsis due to immunocompromised state due to chemotherapy due to breast cancer)
- Pneumonia (Acceptable: Sepsis due to pneumonia due to chronic alcoholism)
- Renal failure (Acceptable: Renal failure due to diabetes)
- Respiratory failure (Acceptable: Respiratory failure due to pneumonia due to cystic fibrosis)
- Sepsis (Acceptable: Sepsis due to endocarditis due to intravenous drug abuse)
- Sepsis due to pneumonia (Acceptable: Sepsis due to pneumonia due to advanced age)

Not Acceptable: *The order of causes of death is important and must make sense (Line A is due to Line B which is due to Line C....)*

- Lung cancer due to pneumonia (Acceptable: Pneumonia due to lung cancer)
- Bladder cancer due to urosepsis (Acceptable: Urosepsis due to bladder cancer)
- Coronary artery disease due to bladder cancer (Acceptable: Part I: Coronary artery disease, Part II: bladder cancer or vice versa).