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Maternal Death: Care of the Deceased Policy

Hutt Maternity Policies provide guidance for the midwives and medical staff working in Hutt Maternity Services. Please discuss policies relevant to your care with your Lead Maternity Carer.

Maternal deaths

Section 110(1)(b) of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 (“NZPHD Act”) repealed the Maternal Mortality Research Act 1968 (including its amendments). In its place the NZPHD Act set up a new regime governing mortality review committees (section 18 and Schedule 5 refers). The definition of maternal death was also repealed.

Medical practitioners should note that any deaths which meet the definition in section 14(2)(d) of the Coroners Act 2006 (as below) must be reported pursuant to the provisions of that Act. There are also provisions in Schedule 5 of the NZPHD Act that govern the supply of information to mortality review committees. Any person may be required to supply information to such committees pursuant to the NZPHD Act.

The clinical head of department and clinical midwifery manager must be notified immediately of the death. After hours, notify the duty manager and after hours manager. The death must be reported to the coroner.

Maternal deaths must be registered with the Perinatal & Maternal Mortality Review Committee (PMMRC) – see local PMMRC coordinator – contact the maternity department for details.

13 Duty to report deaths

(2) A person who learns of a death of a kind described in section 14 must report that death to a Police employee as soon as practicable unless the person believes that the death is already known to the New Zealand Police, or will be reported to a Police employee by another person.

14 Deaths that must be reported under section 13(2)

(2) The kinds of deaths referred to in subsection (1) are...

(d) the death of a woman that occurred while the woman was giving birth, or that appears to have been a result of the woman being pregnant or giving birth:

Reference and associated policy

Coroners Act 2006

Hutt Valley Hospital Policy: Care of the deceased - DC1

Informed Consent

The right of a consumer to make an informed choice and give informed consent, including the right to refuse medical treatment, is enshrined in law and in the Code of Health and Disability Consumers’ Rights in New Zealand. This means that a woman can choose to decline treatment, referral to another practitioner, or transfer of clinical responsibility. If this occurs follow the process map on page 18 of the Referral Guidelines (Ministry of Health, 2012).