The autopsy as an outcome and performance measure

Shojania K, Burton E, McDonald K

Record Status
This is a bibliographic record of a published health technology assessment from a member of INAHTA. No evaluation of the quality of this assessment has been made for the HTA database.

Citation

Authors' objectives
This report reviews the literature addressing the extent to which the autopsy reveals important errors in clinical diagnosis and the roles these data have in measuring and improving clinical performance.

Authors' conclusions
At the level of the individual clinician, the chance that autopsy will reveal important unsuspected diagnoses in a given case remains significant. Moreover, clinicians do not seem able to predict the cases in which such findings are likely to occur. There is no evidence to determine whether findings from autopsy improve subsequent clinical performance. The existing literature does demonstrate that clinical diagnoses, whether obtained from death certificates or hospital discharge data, contain major inaccuracies compared with autopsy diagnoses. The health care system as a whole can thus benefit enormously from autopsy data, by substantially enhancing the accuracy of vital statistics, which play important roles in research, funding, and other policy decisions. Future research opportunities include characterizing the factors leading to errors in clinical diagnosis, establishing optimal means of using autopsy data in performance improvement strategies, and exploring different mechanisms for encouraging autopsies.

Project page URL
http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/tp/autopsytp.htm

Indexing Status
Subject indexing assigned by CRD

MeSH
Autopsy; Cause of Death; Quality Assurance, Health Care; Quality of Health Care

Language Published
English

Country of organisation
United States

Address for correspondence
Center for Outcomes and Evidence Technology Assessment Program, 540 Gaither Road, Rockville, MD 20850, USA.
Tel: +1 301 427 1610; Fax: +1 301 427 1639; Email: martin.erlichman@ahrq.hhs.gov

AccessionNumber
32003000421

Date bibliographic record published
12/03/2003
Date abstract record published
12/03/2003