

Death Certification in Scotland

Introduction

Every year in Scotland, there are approximately 58,000 deaths, usually with a peak in the months of December and January.¹ A significant number of deaths occur at home and thus GPs are tasked with the issuing of many death certificates. Death certification changed in Scotland in 2014. The new Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) was introduced, followed a year later, by the Death Certification Review Service (DCRS). At that time, the use of electronic recording and transmission of the MCCD went live via SCI gateway.

The death certification process can provoke anxiety for medical practitioners who are concerned that they submit an accurate and acceptable MCCD. In many practices, the request to issue a MCCD may come to the attention of the duty doctor who may not have known the patient well.

The DCRS aims to support medical practitioners with death certification. As this module deals with death certification in Scotland, and refers to the Scottish legal system, it may not be relevant for PBSGL groups in other countries in the UK and in Europe.

Aims of this module

- Familiarise GPs with the DCRS and improve communication between them
- Deal with death certification when there may be concerns about the quality of care before death
- The reporting of deaths to the procurator fiscal
- The use of advance registration to avoid delays for families who may have religious or cultural reasons to request prompt funeral arrangements
- Dealing with the consequences of a patient's death for the primary health care team

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) have other educational resources available on the Turas Learn platform. This includes specific and detailed guidance on the completion of the MCCD and tips on what to write on these certificates (and what not to write, such as abbreviations). You can access this resource via your personal Turas Learn account at: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/> This PBSGL module will not duplicate information and guidance listed in the Turas e-module .