

MOURNING THE DECEASED AND OFFERING CONDOLENCES

The mourning period will be for three days. However, in the case of a husband dying the wife will mourn and grieve for four months and ten days as stipulated in the Qur'an.

It is a Muslim's duty to offer condolences, comfort, and sympathy to the family and the relatives of the deceased. This strengthens the relationships within the Muslim community.

Condolences may be offered to the family and the relatives of the deceased before, during or after burial for up to three days, but it may be offered even at a later time if someone did not hear about it or he was far away.

There are many other customs that originally existed to express the sense of loss felt perhaps continues as a vehicle to inform fellow community members that their support will be needed in the weeks and months ahead. Hence, some Muslim communities hold gatherings for three or more days, and hire people to recite Quran loudly.

For further support and advice, please contact the Chaplaincy department to discuss any of the above issues on:

Pinderfields Hospital: 01924 542567

Dewsbury Hospital: 01924 816255

Muslim Chaplains currently working at Mid Yorks NHS Trust are as follows:

Moulana Aslam Seedat (Male Muslim Chaplain) – email:
aslam.seedat@midyorks.nhs.uk

Moulana Ilyas Dalal (Male Muslim Chaplain) – email:
llyas.dalal@midyorks.nhs.uk

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Step by Step Guide to a Muslim Death

A Guide for Staff

SPECIAL CASES

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A) Foetus & Stillborn

If the foetus is less than four months old (Mother was pregnant for less than four months), then the foetus may not be washed; the foetus should be wrapped in a piece of white cloth and buried. Then there is no Salatul Janazah (Funeral Prayer)

In case of a stillbirth (a child born after 24th week of pregnancy), then the baby may be washed, shrouded (Using one or two winding sheets to cover the whole body), and given a name. Muslims have the choice whether to perform the Funeral Prayer (Salaatul Janaaza) or not.

At time of birth, if only the head of the baby emerges and signs of life were noticeable before death, the same ruling applies as for a stillborn. It should be noted that if more than half the body emerges and the child lives before dying, then it will be considered - born alive. Half of the body implies the emergence of the top torso up to the chest (if a head- first delivery) and up to the navel (if feet- first delivery)

Note

Mid Yorks NHS Trust has always arranged the group of foetuses to be buried with the presence of the Muslim Chaplain. There may be occasions when the family have taken the foetus away and conducted a private burial.

B) Children

Before reaching the age of puberty, a child may be washed by males or females. Shrouding a child for girls use a shirt and two winding sheets and for boys two or three winding sheets may be used.

For those children who reached the age of puberty, they should be dealt with as an adult.

FUNERAL PRAYER

A divine service is held over the dead body of every Muslim, young or old, even of infants who have lived only a few minutes. When the soul leaves the body, preparations are made for bidding him/her the last farewell.

It is highly recommended that, after washing and shrouding the body of the deceased, the body should not to be kept long, but rather taken quickly, prayed for, and then buried.

Funeral Prayer is required to be performed in congregation to request pardon for the deceased and all dead Muslims, and to wrap them all in God's Mercy.

It is preferable that Funeral Prayer be performed outside the Mosque or the Prayer room like in activity rooms or courtyards.

Funeral Prayer is a collective obligation. A Muslim should not hesitate to participate in it, whether or not the deceased or his relatives are known to him.

THE BURIAL

Islam has a unique style of building graves and cemeteries that is characterised by humility, simplicity and economy in costs and avoidance in glorifying the dead with elaborate monuments.

The burial should be done as soon as possible after death. The deceased should be buried in the locality in which he/she lived. It is undesirable to take the body to the person's own country or to another city. However, some Muslim communities prefer their loved ones to be buried abroad. Hence, an **Out of England** certificate will be sought from the coroner before the body can be transferred abroad. Cremation is forbidden in Islam.

DEATH

The care of a dying patient and their relatives is one of the most difficult aspects of a clinician's job. Enabling an individual to die with dignity can also be deeply rewarding. Providing culturally competent care to the dying requires knowledge and skills.

Islamic law defines certain expected behaviours at the time of death; our experience, based on witnessing and participating in the deaths of hundreds of our religious affiliates, suggests that these rituals are in the main adopted by Muslims.

Muslims consider death as a transitional state from one world to another, as birth is. No one knows when and where he/she will die or knows how. Muslims are constantly reminded of death and its preparation. Death is not considered a taboo subject as Muslims are constantly reading verses of the Qur'an that discuss the subject of death in detail.

WHEN A MUSLIM IS AT THE POINT OF DEATH

Every person prefers to die at home rather than in a hospital environment. However, in the case of a dying patient, family and friends will try to be present at the final moments of death to offer support, comfort and advice to the dying patient. They will encourage him/her to turn to God and supplicate and most importantly encourage him/her to utter the 'Declaration of Faith' – There is none worthy of worship except God and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the true messenger of God.

Those who are present near a dying Muslim should do the following:

- They should be kind and patient
- They should never leave him alone.
- They should give him hope, not allowing him to collapse out of pain or panic.

Furthermore, they will pray certain chapters from the Qur'an beside the dying patient. Fifty to a hundred visitors attend the hospital during the final moments of a dying patient which create major problems for staff and other patients. Staff feel pressured due to the exceptional volume of people present in a small area. It is very important that staff stipulate the policy of visiting from the outset, however, sensitivity should be taken into consideration and if there is any possibility of allowing three/four instead of two then this should be taken into account.

Nevertheless, the sensitive nature of the situation requires understanding and some form of compromise. In general most visitors adhere to the protocols of the hospital.

JUST AFTER DEATH HAS BEEN DETERMINED

When the patient is confirmed dead, family members or those who are present should:

- Close the eyes and mouth of the deceased.
- Limbs should be straightened.
- They should cover all his body completely with a clean sheet.

In the case of non complex deaths, the doctor present who attended the deceased during their final illness will sign the **Medical Certificate** that indicates the cause of death. This will be issued to the family who will take this form to the Registrars Office to acquire the **Certificate for Burial** known as the **Green Form**. Please note that an appointment will need to be sought prior to attending the Registrars Office.

However, if there are complexities to the death of the patient, then the coroner may intervene. The coroner will intervene in cases where the cause of death has not been ascertained or if a patient has died in hospital less than twenty four hours since his/her admittance. If the doctor treating the deceased has not seen him/her after the death or within fourteen days before the death, then the death must be reported to the coroner. Also, in the following cases the coroner will be the only person who will confirm the cause of death; if the cause of death is unknown or uncertain, the death was sudden or unexplained, the death occurred in police custody or prison, the death was caused by an industrial disease, the death was caused during an operation or the patient did not recover from an anaesthetic.

The coroner will not seek consent from the family if he/she determines that a post-mortem must be carried out. If the post-mortem is carried out and the examinations show that the death was due to natural causes then the coroner will issue a **Pink Form (Form 100B)** which usually is sent direct to the Registrar of Deaths.

Note: Invasive procedure is forbidden in Islam. However, if the coroner believes it is necessary to establish the cause of death then Islam permits the autopsy to be carried out on the Islamic principle of 'Law of Necessity' that permits what is forbidden. Nevertheless, if alternative methods can be used to ascertain the cause of death then they should be implemented in order to preserve the sacredness and dignity of life. Hence, the Muslim community is advocating for MRI scan - a non invasive procedure to be carried out that ensures the respect and dignity of the deceased.

The hospital will keep the body in the mortuary until the family have arranged for it to be removed. In normal circumstances the body will not be released from the hospital until the death has been registered and a green form is obtained from the Registrar of Deaths. An Early Release Policy is in place and the hospital will do all it can to facilitate early release on religious grounds. The hospital will also make arrangements to ensure that the deceased's possessions are returned to the next of kin.

WASHING THE BODY

When a Muslim dies, it is the responsibility of his/her family or other Muslims in the community to wash him/her according to the Islamic rites of washing the deceased. Two or three persons may perform the washing.

The person(s) who may wash the deceased should be:

- Adult Muslim(s).
- Know the Islamic way of washing the dead and be able to carry out the washing.
- Not make any comment on the body of the deceased.

PLACE OF WASHING:

The deceased's body should be washed in a clean, secluded, and private place where clean water and soap are available. Gloves or pieces of cloth are needed.

The body of the deceased should be washed with water and, if available, lotus leaves, or camphor (To be used in the final wash).

The washing should be done three or five, or any more odd number of times if necessary.

An Imam or knowledgeable person may be present to advice and guide the family who will be washing the deceased's body.

SHROUDING THE BODY

THE SHROUDING OF A MALE

The shrouding of a male should consist of three white winding sheets about {7 x 7 feet}, clean and large enough to conceal the whole body, after having been perfumed with incense. Use 4 tie ropes, each 7 feet long.

The material of the sheet should not be silk, nor should any gold be used.

THE SHROUDING OF A FEMALE

The shrouding of a female should consist of five white garments, (Two winding sheet, a long loose sleeveless shirt {From shoulder to feet}, a waist wrapper, and a head veil), these should be large enough to cover the whole body and may be perfumed with incense, a loin cloth may be used to bind the upper part of her legs, use 4 tie ropes, each one is 7 feet long.