



NHS Management Executive
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

23rd October 1998

Dear Colleague

**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCOTLAND
MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE**

**REVISED MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF CAUSE OF
DEATH - FORM 11**

Summary

1. This letter provides information about changes to the medical certificate of cause of death which is to be used in Scotland from 1 January 1999. Copies of the revised certificate and the guidance notes (in books of 20 certificates per book) are being sent to you under separate cover by mid November 1998. Certificates in the old format are not to be used after the end of 1998.

Background

2. Under the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965, a medical certificate of cause of death is required to be completed by a registered medical practitioner, for any death occurring in Scotland.

3. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a standard format in which to record causes of death, and this format has been followed in the medical certificate used in Scotland since its introduction. Following international studies on the quality of medical information on death certificates, the WHO has advised that the format should be amended to allow, where appropriate, more detail to be provided about the sequence of events leading to death.

4. In view of this forthcoming change, a consultation exercise on the lay out of the certificate, and the guidance notes that accompany it, was undertaken by the General Register Office for Scotland with all relevant professional interests. The aim of the exercise was, in making the certificate easier for doctors to complete and less ambiguous, to help improve the accuracy of the information contained in the certificate, which in statistical form is used extensively by researchers, epidemiologists and health service planners.

October 1998»

Addressees

For action:

General Managers,
Health Boards

Chief Executives,
NHS Trusts

General Manager,
State Hospitals Board for Scotland

General Manager,
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General Manager,
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For information:

Directors of Public Health

NHS Trust Medical Directors

NHS ME Directors

General Enquiries to:

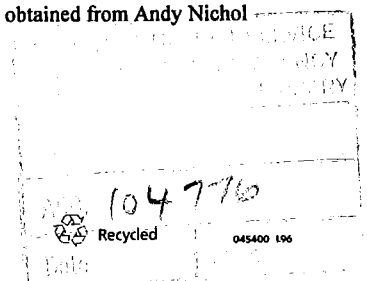
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Top-up supplies of books of certificates are available to doctors from Registrars of births, deaths and marriages.

Further copies of this MEL may be obtained from Andy Nichol



5. The most obvious change is to the layout of the certificate, now constructed in such a way as to permit a summary of the revised and fuller guidance notes to be placed adjacent to the certificate, to facilitate completion. The mixture of ringed boxes, numbers and tick boxes has been simplified. The change will also be backed by training material for use in teaching junior doctors. The new certificate will allow a greater measure of formal control and audit since the individual forms will be serially numbered. The General Register Office will record the range of serially numbered certificates issued to each Health Board. Registrars of births, deaths and marriages will be instructed to record the issue of any top-up supplies of serially numbered certificates to doctors, institutions, etc in their area.

6. The revised certificate has been prescribed by statutory instrument made by the Registrar General for Scotland and approved by the Secretary of State. It comes into force on 1 January 1999.

Action

7. Health Boards are requested to circulate this letter, together with the revised guidance notes enclosed in books of certificates, to all GPs in their area. NHS Trusts are asked to ensure wide distribution of this information and books of certificates as appropriate.

Yours sincerely



KEVIN J WOODS

Director of Strategy and Performance Management