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Subject:	AUTOPSY SERVICE				
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AUTOPSY SERVICE

Autopsy services are provided by the Pathology Department for patients who expire after admission to Jackson-Madison County General Hospital or other affiliated hospitals. The autopsy is considered a medical consultation between the patients attending physician and pathologist. Its performance is of value to medical professionals and the public as an educational tool as well as a tool to assess the quality of patient care, to evaluate diagnostic accuracy or to monitor the effectiveness of new technologies or efficacies of therapeutic regimens. The information obtained is a source of clinical information in the quality assessment and improvement programs of the hospital. The following are general criteria for autopsy:

1. Unanticipated death
2. Death occurring while patient is being treated under a new therapeutic trial regimen
3. Unexpected intra-operative or intra-procedure death
4. Unexpected death occurring within 48 hours after surgery or an invasive diagnostic procedure
5. Death incident to pregnancy
6. Death when the cause is sufficiently obscure to delay completion of death certificate
7. Death in infants or children with a congenital malformation

Autopsies may be performed upon request by the attending physician and consent by the patient's legal next of kin. The responsible pathologist has the ultimate authority for determining whether or not the autopsy will be performed. Certain cases may be deemed inappropriate and thereby deferred. These may include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Cases falling under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner or coroner. All such cases should be referred to the County Coroner and if autopsy is requested the case referred to the State Medical Examiner's office.
- In cases in which the request for an autopsy is from the family of the deceased rather than from the physician in attendance it may be appropriate for the family requesting the service

to be responsible for payment and the service performed elsewhere. This is an especially salient consideration in cases in which there is reason to believe a threat of legal action against the hospital or its physicians is the motivation for autopsy request.

- Cases that may be deemed an unacceptable biohazard. These may include, but are not necessarily limited to, cases of HIV, prion or slow virus encephalopathies or other viral illness such as hepatitis. It is necessary that pathologists and assistants practice in a safe medical environment and available facilities may not be properly equipped to protect from certain of these hazards.
- Cases in which the autopsy permit is not properly filled out and signed by the legally responsible next of kin or in which there is disagreement between individuals of the same order of kinship (i.e. two children, etc.).

In cases such as these or any other "private" autopsy request the pathology department has available referral information to appropriate outside agencies as well as information regarding fees and transport.