

Computed Tomography Service to Assist Coroner's Investigations

Pathology and Imaging Departments
Information for Families



On behalf of Leicester's Hospitals we extend our sincere condolences to you and your family at this sad and difficult time.

University Hospitals of Leicester **NHS**
NHS Trust

Caring at its best

Introduction

In England and Wales if a person dies unexpectedly, and the cause of death is not known, an investigation will be undertaken by Her Majesty's (HM) Coroner, which in many cases will require a Pathologist to perform a post-mortem (PM) examination. This normally includes an invasive autopsy to establish the medical cause of death.

In some circumstances and if it can provide a medical cause of death, a PM Computed Tomography (PMCT) scan may be used instead of the invasive autopsy.

We are offering a PMCT service for families. This option may be purchased by families if they wish to avoid an invasive autopsy. This has the support of the Leicestershire HM Coroners, but unfortunately there is currently no City and County Council funding for the additional costs incurred.

This service may not be suitable for all cases and the Pathologists performing the PM investigation for HM Coroner will review each case and advise whether PMCT is likely to be sufficient for the investigation.

What is a Post-Mortem Computed Tomography (PMCT) Scan?

The PMCT scan uses the same CT scanning technology that is used in the Leicestershire hospitals for the diagnosis of medical problems in life. The body lies on a table and passes through the scanner, whilst x-rays are used to construct an image of the whole body. The scan is performed by specially trained Radiographers. The CT scan itself is non-invasive and does not injure the body in any way.

What is a PMCT Scan? (continued)

The procedure at Leicester also uses **contrast enhancement** by injection of a dye if possible. This is the same dye that is used for our scans in the living. The injection takes place through a tube inserted into the lower left neck. The scans may also be performed under **positive airway pressure** to expand the lungs. This uses a clinical airway which is inserted via a small incision in the lower neck. Both these procedures are minimally invasive and similar to procedures commonly performed in the medical care of the living. After the scan, the tubes are removed and the incisions closed, but the incision site may still be visible. It is for this reason we call the PMCT a **minimally-invasive** post-mortem investigation rather than **non-invasive**.

What does the PMCT service involve?

If HM Coroner has instructed a Leicester Pathologist to undertake a post-mortem examination, the family may discuss their options with the Coroner's Officers or by ringing our PMCT co-ordinator. If the answers to initial questions imply PMCT may be suitable, and a referral is made to our service, the Duty Pathologist will further advise whether PMCT is likely to give a medical cause of death for the individual case after an external examination of the deceased and study of the circumstances of death. The PMCT co-ordinator will communicate this advice to the family and advise them how to proceed if they wish to request this service.

This PMCT service provides a set of diagnostic images that are available to the Duty Pathologist. These images are for the purpose of HM Coroner's investigation and will not be released to the family.

What does the PMCT service involve? (continued)

The Duty Pathologist will then use the PMCT images, as well as an external examination of the deceased and study of the circumstances of death to provide the HM Coroner with a medical cause of death.

In some cases, either because the investigation above cannot establish the cause of death or it shows findings that require more rigorous investigation, an invasive autopsy may be required. We anticipate that this will be in less than 15% of cases. When an invasive autopsy is required it will normally be a limited autopsy and therefore substantially less invasive than a standard autopsy. If the PMCT service is requested against the advice of the Duty Pathologist, the chance of invasive autopsy being required will be much higher.

We always endeavour to perform post-mortem examinations as quickly as possible. The PMCT service may usually take about two days but may take up to three days to provide a cause of death to the Coroner. However, due to the unpredictable nature of each case it is difficult to give an exact timescale for completion of every examination. To help families with planning funeral arrangements we advise that patients undergoing post mortem examination, including PMCT, may remain in our care for up to four working days.

What cases are suitable for this service?

The service is offered for individuals over 18 years old at death. The Duty Pathologist will review the circumstances of death to ensure that PMCT is only recommended in cases where it has a high probability of identifying a cause of death.

What cases are suitable for this service? (continued)

In particular we will normally advise against using the PMCT service if:

- There are on-going investigations by Police or other agencies.
- Further investigations such as toxicology or histology are likely to be required.
- There is concern that the death is not from natural causes.
- Death may be due to reportable infectious disease.
- The deceased was already heavily investigated prior to death without a diagnosis being made.

Tissue donation

Certain tissues, such as corneas and bone, can be used at an interval after death. If tissue donation is considered this will take priority, but probably will not preclude this service.

Cost of the scan and what is included

The cost of the scan is £400 + VAT. This must be paid before we can do the scan.

Payment can be made online by credit or debit card or by cash or in person at with the Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General Hospital or Glenfield Hospital.

The price covers the costs to the NHS of the scan itself, preparation for the scan and oversight of the service by a specialist Radiologist.

Cost of the scan and what is included (continued)

The Pathologist's fees, including reporting of the PMCT scan, subsequent report of the full post-mortem investigation and any further tests required, including limited autopsy, are part of a separate agreement between HM Coroner and Pathologist. The Pathologist therefore has no financial interest in the type of post-mortem investigation performed. Their reports will go directly to HM Coroner and will not be provided directly to the family or the next of kin.

How to request a scan

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for you and your family, but should you wish to proceed with this service, then please contact us on 0116 258 5080 as soon as possible during office hours (9.00am - 4.00pm) so that the necessary arrangements can be made.

Also, if you are considering using this service but are undecided, please contact us on the number above by 3:30pm so the standard investigation process can be temporarily suspended while you decide. This process can only be delayed for a maximum of 24 hours.

Further information on the PMCT service

If you require any further information or have any questions, please contact the PMCT Service co-ordinator on 0116 258 5080.

For further information following a bereavement

If you have been bereaved and need some help or advice there are various sources of help. These include:

Leicester's Hospitals' Bereavement Services:

www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/patient-and-visitor-services/bereavement-services/

or telephone:

0116 258 5194 or 0116 258 5196 (Royal Infirmary),

0116 258 4235 or 0116 258 4236 (Leicester General Hospital)

0116 258 3401 or 0116 258 3417 (Glenfield Hospital).

HM Coroner: For those living in or near Loughborough, they can be contacted on 0116 305 7732. For anyone living in or near Leicester, they can be contacted on 0116 454 1030 and information can be found at coroners.leicester.gov.uk

Questions

If you have any questions write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your department.



Today's research is tomorrow's care

We all benefit from research. Leicester's Hospitals is a research active Trust so you may find that research is happening when you visit the hospital or your clinic.

If you are interested in finding out how you can become involved in a clinical trial or to find out more about taking part in research, please speak to your clinician or GP.

If you would like this information in another language or format, please contact the service equality manager on 0116 250 2959

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات في شكل أو لغة أخرى ، يرجى الاتصال
مع مدير الخدمة للمساواة في 0116 250 2959.

আপনি যদি এই লিফলেটের অনুবাদ - লিখিত বা অডিও টেপ'এ চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে সার্ভিস
ইকুয়ালিটি ম্যানেজার ডেভ বেকার'এর সাথে 0116 250 2959 নাম্বারে যোগাযোগ করুন।

如果您想用另一种语言或格式来显示本资讯，请致电 0116 250 2959
联系“服务平等化经理” (Service Equality Manager)。

જો તમને આ પત્રકઠાનું લેખિત અથવા ટેઈપ ઉપર ભાષાંતર જોઈતું હોય તો
મહેરબાની કરી સર્વિસ ઈકુવાલિટી મેનેજરનો 0116 250 2959 ઉપર સંપર્ક કરો.

यदि आप को इस लीफ़लेट का लिखती या टेप पर अनुवाद चाहिए तो कृपया
डेव बेकर, सर्विस इक्वालिटी मैनेजर से 0116 250 2959 पर सम्पर्क कीजिए।

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać niniejsze informacje w tłumaczeniu na inny język
lub w innym formacie, prosimy skontaktować się z Menedżerem ds. równości w
dostępnie do usług (Service Equality Manager) pod numerem telefonu 0116 250 2959.

નેકર તુવાનું ઈસ લીફલેટ ડા સિખતી નાં ટેપ કીઠા અનુવાદ ચાહીતા હોંદે તાં કિરપા કરહે હેઇ ષેકર, સર્વિસ
ઇકુઆલિટી મેનેજર નાલ 0116 250 2959 'એ સંપર્ક કરો।

Ak by ste chceli dostať túto informáciu v inom jazyku, alebo formáte, kontaktujte
prosím manažéra rovnosti služieb na tel. číslo 0116 250 2959.

Haddaad rabto warqadan oo turjuman oo ku duuban cajalad ama qoraal ah
fadlan la xirii, Maamulaha Adeegga Sinaanta 0116 250 2959.