

FAQ: Is there a difference between “pronouncing death” and “certifying death’?”

The answer is **YES**. Pronouncement of death is the process of gathering and analyzing information about a client’s health status and making a clinical judgment that life has ceased. This is done by observing and noting the absence of cardiac and respiratory functions. Pronouncement of death is used to formalize its occurrence and to provide assurance that appropriate measures are being taken to ensure that individuals are indeed deceased before being treated as such. Registered nurses (RN) and nurse practitioners (NP) perform a final assessment and pronounce death for clients as a natural continuation of compassionate and timely nursing care. Pronouncement of death is not a “legal” requirement or legislated act. It is a nursing activity supported by employer policy.

Certifying death is a legislated act (*Vital Statistics Act*, amended April 1, 2017). It is the process wherein the Medical Certificate of Death is completed and signed, attesting to the fact, cause, and manner of the client’s death. This is done by an NP, a medical practitioner, or the coroner.

For more information about this topic or any other practice questions, please contact NANB’s nurse consultants by at 1-800-442-4417 or nanb@nanb.nb.ca.

REFERENCES

Government of New Brunswick. *Vital Statistics Act*. Amended April 1st, 2017