

The Process of Neonatal Post Mortem Examination

24. To conduct an effective post mortem examination on a neonate, the pathologist requires details of the obstetric history of the mother in addition to a full medical history of events in the baby's life. This would include any particular clinical concerns, and the clinicians' opinions about the events leading to death. In neonatal deaths, events occurring in the pregnancy and labour are often of paramount importance, including any placental abnormality, which is assessed by placental pathological examination. It is therefore very important that the placenta accompanies the baby for examination. The medical history of the baby is crucial as this may reveal symptoms, signs, investigation results and clinical opinions of relevance.
25. The post mortem examination involves radiology investigations, typically a whole body xray, and CT and MRI scan in specific cases where indicated. Radiology investigations are carried out before I begin the post mortem examination, and xray images should be available to view on the computer in the mortuary, but often the radiology reports are not available at this stage. In a forensic case with police involvement, I request a report before commencing the post mortem examination, which may be an interim verbal report before a final written report is available. In a case not indicated to be suspicious, such as an in-hospital neonatal death, my practice was to proceed with the post mortem examination after viewing the xray images.
26. The pathologist performs identification of the body, an external examination, an internal macroscopic examination and removal and weighing of the organs. The organs are carefully examined and small pieces are taken for microscopic examination. The examination may also include other tests for infection, metabolic disease, genetics and toxicological analysis. The post mortem examination does not involve exact measurement of physiological processes at the time of death. Correlation of the pathological findings with the clinical information and clinical opinions is therefore important to place them in context and decide upon their significance. In neonatal deaths, especially if there is significant prematurity, there may be a number of different concurrent pathological processes in multiple organ systems, and it may not be possible to say with certainty exactly which caused death from pathological examination alone.
27. The Royal College of Pathologists published Guidelines on Autopsy Practice: Neonatal Death in May 2019. A copy of this document is included as Exhibit "JM8". The Royal College of Pathologists published Guidelines on Autopsy Practice: Sudden unexpected

[INQ0102013]