

# Guidance on body storage

**The HTA licensing standards on governance and quality systems and premises, facilities and equipment reinforce that the dignity of the deceased is essential and maintained.**

**GQ1(c):** Procedures on body storage prevent practices that disregard the dignity of the deceased.

**PFE1(d):** The premises are secure (for example there is controlled access to the body storage area(s) and PM room and the use of CCTV to monitor access).

**PFE2(c):** Storage for long-term storage of bodies and bariatric bodies is sufficient to meet needs.

Guidance for PFE2(c) states:

“bodies should be moved into frozen storage after 30 days in refrigerated storage or before, depending on the condition of the body.”

HTA-licensed establishments in the PM sector are expected to ensure that bodies are stored in appropriate conditions and are fully shrouded, including the covering of heads and feet. Bodies and tissue should be stored at temperatures that will preserve their condition. It is a requirement for establishments to have sufficient freezer storage facilities for bodies, including bariatric bodies, to meet their needs. If long-term storage facilities are not available, alternative arrangements should be in place.

Staff should be familiar with the procedures to initiate transfer of bodies to long-term storage when required. Systems should be in place to alert staff to the need to transfer bodies into long-term storage. All procedures for initiating, transferring and releasing bodies from long-term storage should be documented and any deviations recorded.

Body storage areas should be secure and should not be accessible by visitors or unauthorised staff. Licensable activities, such as post-mortem examination, should occur in appropriate and secure areas.

## HTA recommendations

- Check and document the condition of bodies upon arrival to the mortuary.
- Following admittance, undertake regular condition checks to ensure optimal preservation of bodies whilst in storage. Document dates of condition checks and record actions taken to prevent deterioration.
- Replace soiled shrouding, and clean bodies where possible (with agreement from the Coroner where required).
- Consider transfer of bodies showing signs of deterioration to long-term storage following discussions with the Coroner and family, where appropriate. Do not wait until 30 days of storage to initiate these procedures if the condition of the body is deteriorating.

Where it is not possible to transfer a body to long-term storage, document the reasons. This is particularly relevant where a body is showing signs of

deterioration, or where a body has been in refrigerated storage for longer than 30 days. Conduct regular reviews of such cases, ensuring information is recorded and followed up appropriately.

- Transfer bodies to refrigerated storage that require thawing following long-term storage to prevent any further deterioration.
- Only use body storage facilities for storing of bodies and not other items such as clinical waste or laboratory reagents.
- Ensure specialised cold cots used in maternity departments etc. are temperature monitored when in use, subject to regular service and maintenance and staff are appropriately trained in how to use this equipment. HTA advises that establishments develop policies and risk assessments for the use of such equipment if not already in place.