

## Establishment of a Postmortem Centre Mortuary - II: Manpower and Human Resource Management

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### Abstract

The doctors and staff are an important pillar of Mortuary Management. Their work and attitude directly affects not only the legal system but also the humanitarian aspects of the society. If we expect the highest quality of Medicolegal work and a sympathetic attitude towards the relatives of deceased, then we have to provide the recommended manpower not only in numbers but also in quality. Human resource and manpower management is equally important in a Mortuary Setup in a Hospital setup as important as the infrastructure. Though the Mortuary holds a very vital position but in most of the Hospitals as a bridge between the Medical system and legal system but still the demand for the requisite manpower is often overlooked. The authors in this article aim to detail the staffing pattern and their job responsibilities in the Mortuary. The recommended welfare measures of the staff are also included in the article.

**Keywords:** Mortuary Management; Employee welfare; Postmortem; Autopsy Surgeon; Forensic Medicine.

### Introduction

Most of the Mortuaries in our country are severely understaffed not only in the quantity of personnel but also in quality of trained manpower. Human resource and manpower management is equally important in a Mortuary Setup in a Hospital setup as important as the infrastructure. The authors in their first article in this series deliberated upon the basic infrastructure of Establishment of a Postmortem Centre Mortuary in the July to Dec 2018 issue of this Journal [1]. Just constructing the building and

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providing equipments will not serve the public interests till there is trained and professional manpower [2]. The shortage of manpower is not only limited to the doctors but also there is gross shortage of trained paramedical staff also. Though the Mortuary holds a very vital position but in most of the Hospitals as a bridge between the Medical system and legal system but still the demand for the requisite manpower is often overlooked. In continuation in the series of article regarding Mortuary management [1], the authors in this article aim to detail the staffing pattern and their job responsibilities in the Mortuary. The recommended welfare measures of the staff are also included in the article.

### Standardization of Human Resource Including Doctors and Support Staff [3,4,5].

A basic outline of required number of staff was recommended in guidelines issues by Directorate General of Health services, Ministry of Health and

Family Welfare, Government of India in 2014 [3] but the authors are pained to submit that even after 5 years the recommended Manpower is still not present in Most of the Mortuaries. The staffing of a mortuary depends on the size of the hospital and the complexity of the operations. Besides doing their Medicolegal duties the doctors had to attend the Courts of Law for giving Expert evidence to prove their reports. And also new aspects like Forensic Histo-pathology, Virtual Autopsy, Forensic radiology, Toxicology Lab, DNA LAB are emerging in the field of Forensic Medicine. So, considering the new development and applied aspects of forensic Medicine, the following uniform staff is recommended:

1. Faculty Member/Specialists [M.D. Forensic Medicine] -2.
2. Senior/Junior resident Doctors-2
3. Mortuary/Post mortem/Lab Technician -1
4. Clerk/ Steno / Data Entry Operator -2
5. Medical record Keeper/Technician-2
6. Technician-Biochemistry
7. Technician-Histo-Pathology)-1
8. X-Ray Technician-1
9. Morgue attendants-5
10. Post mortem Assistant -2
11. Trained Photographer-1
12. Store Officer-1
13. Sanitary attendant/Multipurpose worker -12
14. Peon -2
15. Guard- 4

For every additional 100 autopsies or part thereof, per year following additional staff is recommended:

1. Faculty Member/Specialists [M.D. Forensic Medicine] -1
2. Senior Resident-1
3. Junior resident-1
4. Post mortem Assistant -2
5. Sanitary Attendants-2

Additional personnel, required to run the Toxicology and DNA Lab:

1. Scientist for Toxicology.
2. Scientist for DNA.

### **Job Responsibility [4,5]**

The Job responsibilities of Various Cadres of the staffing of the Mortuary should be clearly defined so as to have an effective and cordial working

atmosphere. However, the technical staff should be having the basic knowledge of all the labs/ record section so as to undertake the work of each other in cases of work exigency and leaves. Keeping in view the rapid modernization and computerization, the aim should be to make all the staff well trained in basic computer knowledge and functioning. The recommended brief Job responsibility of every officer is as follows.

#### *1. Faculty Members/ Specialists*

Every day one Faculty/ Specialists acts as Consultant on duty for Postmortem, embalming and Medicolegal work to guide and supervise the cases if required by the resident doctors. One faculty should be designated as Mortuary Incharge for day to day supervision and administrative work of mortuary.

#### *2. Senior and Junior Residents*

The senior residents should work as nodal officer in the functioning of day-to-day medicolegal work of the department. The Investigating Officer reports to the senior resident doctors on duty for postmortem or Medicolegal examination who then proceed depending upon the gravity of the case.

#### *3. Mortuary/Postmortem/Lab Technician*

The Mortuary Technician is a Lab Technician posted in the mortuary with the following job responsibilities:

- To assist in the preservations of specimens during postmortem.
- To assist in embalming and maintaining the records of chemicals.
- To maintain all the files and records pertaining to mortuary equipments/ Instruments.
- To ensure the availability of daily usage items through Hospital or Departmental store.
- To supervise and monitor the work of Morgue attendants.
- To coordinate and keep liaison with the engineering departments/ Service engineers for any problems in the equipments.

#### *4. Clerk/Steno/ Data Entry operator*

- To make entry of cases for postmortem in the PM register.

- To maintain the PM records of the current year.
- To handle all the written administrative communication and maintain their records.
- To maintain all the files and records pertaining to mortuary.

The work of the PM technician and Clerk are overlapping and can be mutually undertaken in case of staff shortage/unavailability.

#### 5. Mortuary Record Technician

- To maintain the records of all the Postmortem/Medicolegal cases made in the Mortuary.
- To keep record of Postmortem reports and their receiving by the police.
- To handle the subsequent opinion in PM and MLC cases and maintain their records.
- To look after the work of Mortuary Technician or Clerk in their absence.
- To attend the Court summons when required to produce the official records.

#### 6. Technicians-Radiology/Histopathology/Biochemistry

- To maintain all the record of chemicals and equipments present in their respective labs.
- To act as the Chief custodian of their labs and ensuring maintenance, cleanliness and periodic disinfection of the labs.
- To take the custody of samples generated during autopsy and ensure the proper labeling, processing and reporting of the results.
- To maintain all the files and records pertaining to the sample processed in their labs mortuary equipments/Instruments.
- To coordinate and keep liaison with the engineering departments/ Service engineers for any problems in the labs.

#### 7. Morgue Attendants

Morgue attendants are the first person who interact with police and public and have a very important role in Mortuary management. A minimum of five morgue attendants should be present in a Mortuary as a morgue attendant is required to be posted round the clock. So to give 24 hours coverage in a shift based duty schedule

four morgue attendants will be required and One morgue attendant is posted in general duty hours to help in postmortem work and also as a replacement on leave. Their job responsibilities are:

- To receive and hand over the body to the police in MLC cases and to the relatives.
- To ensure the proper identification of the body and the recipient, both at the time of receiving and handing over of the body.
- To ensure swift transportation of the bodies from the hospital to the mortuary.
- To properly preserve the body in the cold chamber and maintain the respect and the dignity of the dead.
- To keep the cold chambers under lock and key.
- To maintain the record of bodies coming to the Mortuary in the register.
- To monitor the temperature of the cold chambers and their upkeep.
- To ensure the cleaning of mortuary premises by sanitary attendant.
- To ensure the disinfection of the mortuary hall by weekly washing, fumigation etc.
- To assist the Mortuary Technician in his duties.

#### 8. Postmortem Assistant

- To maintain the disinfection of the autopsy instruments.
- To assist the autopsy surgeon in the postmortem examination, preservation of viscera, labeling, handing over to police etc.
- To maintain the Dignity of Dead bodies while handing over to the relatives.

#### 9. Photographer

- To take the photographs and videography of the postmortem proceedings as and when required by Autopsy Surgeon.
- To maintain the proper filing and preservation of soft copies of Photo/Videography.
- To follow the guidelines of National Human rights Commission regarding Photography and videography.
- To assist in the Departmental academic activities.

### 10. Store Officer

- To assess the yearly requirement of consumables in Mortuary.
- To procure the Consumable and non consumable products as per the General Finance rules, applicable in the Hospital/ Institute.
- To ensure timely delivery of essential instruments and chemicals like scalpel, protective clothing, disinfection chemicals etc so as to ensure smooth functioning of Mortuary.
- To maintain the stock and indent registers as per rules for auditing.

### 11. Sanitary Attendants/Multipurpose workers

Sanitary attendants are backbone of the Mortuary in terms of cleaning, hygiene and disinfection. The term Sanitary Attendants have been replaced by concept of multipurpose worker so their work domain has shifted beyond just cleaning job.

- To maintain cleanliness and hygiene in mortuary.
- To clean the autopsy hall after PM examination.
- To assist and follow the instructions of the morgue attendants and Mortuary technician in handling and shifting of dead bodies.

### 12. Security

Mortuary deals with Medicolegal Criminal cases and is a very sensitive area where relatives are already agitated and aggrieved, emotions run high and anytime an untoward incident can be precipitated. A highly vigilant and tight security is required in the Mortuary. Now a days most of the Hospitals have outsourced the security services. The security should strictly enforce to prevent any unauthorized access in the working area. The access of general public and also police officer who are not attached with the case has to be curtailed at the reception only where their queries will be addressed by the Morgue Attendants.

### 13. Peon

Peon are required to maintain to handle incoming and outgoing communications.

## Employee Welfare

An efficient and cordial working environment leads to high productivity. A happy employee will be working with more dedication and honesty. Mortuary doctors and staff deal with medicolegal criminal cases, dead bodies and aggrieved relatives in their routine course of duties. This could have a negative impact on the psychology of a person. Also the doctors and staff are working in a highly contagious environment which predisposes them to several infections both Blood borne and Air borne. So the authors by their experience suggest the following measures which should be implemented mandatorily by the Hospital administration

1. Periodic Health Check-up and Immunization
  - i. The Mortuary staff including the doctors should have a pre-employment check-up including the blood tests for status of the HIV, HBsAg and HCV.
  - ii. The Immunization status of all the Mortuary staff should be checked before posting.
  - iii. Mandatory Medical Check-Up every six month is recommended for all the staffs for blood borne and respiratory infections including the routine blood tests like LFT, KFT, Lipid Profile.
2. The shortage of the doctors and staff in Mortuary is also due to lack of willingness and social taboo in our society. Nobody wants to be associated with the dead body work. So, Postmortem Allowances should be given to staff and doctors so as to encourage them to work with Enthusiasm in the mortuary.
3. The Mortuary Staff has to work in a negative environment which may also affect their attitude towards life. So, a yearly psychological assessment should be made mandatory for all the personnel which should be included in their service records.
4. The Mortuary personnel should have positive reinforcement activities in their curriculum.
5. A grievance redress mechanism should be in place to resolve the conflicts/complaints between the employees.

## Conclusion

The doctors and staff are an important pillar of Mortuary Management. Their work and attitude directly affects not only the legal system but also the humanitarian aspects of the society. If we expect the highest quality of Medicolegal work and a sympathetic attitude towards the relatives of deceased, then we have to provide the recommended manpower not only in numbers but also in quality.

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