



Performing post-mortem examinations on friends or relatives

BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

**AAPT GUIDANCE REF: GUIDE1 PM FRIENDS AND RELATIVES
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The Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology (AAPT) has received enquiries regarding the issue of Anatomical Pathology Technologists (APTs) caring for and/or assisting in post-mortem examinations on friends or relatives.

There are no published guidelines for addressing this issue within our profession or indeed many others; however common sense and an employer's duty of care must take precedent.

It has been noted that doctors have guidelines not to treat, if possible, friends or relatives. The same applies to biomedical scientists with regards to handling specimens from close friends or relatives.

The AAPT therefore take the view that any reasonable request from an Anatomical Pathology Technologist in respect of abstaining from post-mortem duties on a deceased person that they deem to be a friend or relative, should be seriously considered by their employer and a mutually agreeable solution found. It is the opinion of the AAPT that an APT should not be pressurised into a situation at work that may cause unnecessary anxiety, stress and/or real psychological trauma.

Each case must be judged on an individual basis and it is considered good practice for employers to have a policy in place that deals with such an occurrence. Each occurrence should be documented along with the outcome of any request and the reason for the employer's decision in order for the employer to ensure the well-being of staff and uphold their legal duty of care.

Where it has been deemed necessary for an APT to undertake such a post-mortem for whatever reason, the employer must ensure that adequate support is made available to the APT if requested.

References:

Good Medical Practice

http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice/good_clinical_care/avoid_treating_those_close.asp

Institute of Biomedical Science

<http://www.ibms.org>

