

property & valuables



Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology

best practice guidance

AAPT guidance ref: guide3 property & valuables

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General

In the course of their work, APT's will inevitably find themselves responsible for the valuables of the deceased. It is important that they are able to account at all times for any such valuables for both their own and others safety and for protection against any claims which may arise later.

This guidance looks to provide direction on what the AAPT perceives as best practice when dealing with such items.

When dealing with valuables, it is good practice to ensure that every stage is recorded and corroborated by two people and signatures obtained from both at each stage of the process.

Note: it is equally important to record the absence of any valuables and obtain a signature to confirm this before allowing the body to be removed.

This prevents any ambiguity and ensures that a property check has been carried out. There should be provision in the body register to indicate that this has been done (a tick box and initials will usually suffice) as confirmation the body was checked in case if any claims arising at a later date.

Hospital Deaths

Hospitals should have a policy in place for the recording and security of property from the deceased to cover the period of transfer from the wards to the mortuary.

Any valuables left on the body should be recorded in the ward and this record should accompany the body to the mortuary. Ideally they will have been checked by the porter removing the body prior to leaving the ward.

On arrival at the mortuary, the person admitting the body should transfer the details of any valuables into either the body register or a dedicated property register. If the mortuary is unmanned at the time of admission then it should be checked and entered at the first opportunity following admission. The details of any valuables listed as remaining on the body should be checked against the body and the details transferred into either the register or property book which should be cross referenced to the body store register entry. This record should carry both the name and signature of the person making the entry and the person corroborating.

Occasionally families may request that certain items of jewellery are left on the body, usually rings. This is acceptable practice as long as the items are recorded on the patient admission document (body tag, death notification sheet) and the details are then transferred into the register.

Ideally any rings should be taped onto the finger to prevent them slipping off. Where there is a requirement to remove property then this should be carried out by two people who should both sign the property register to confirm what is present.

When releasing the body, all valuables accompanying or remaining on the body should be checked and agreed with the funeral director as listed and a name and signature obtained of both the APT releasing the remains and the funeral director uplifiting as well as the name of the company he represents.

Bodies From The Community

Generally, where there is any police involvement, it should be the duty of the reporting officer to search the body prior to its being removed to the mortuary. However where this is not possible then either the officer should attend at the mortuary to search the remains on their arrival or arrange for a colleague to attend in his place. The APT may act as the person corroborating any items found. The body should never be searched by the funeral director where they are contracted to do the removal to the mortuary on behalf of the police.

- All bodies should be checked thoroughly for the presence of any valuables on, or as soon after, arrival in the mortuary, as is practical.
- Searching of bodies should always be carried out by 2 people to ensure corroboration of all items found.
- In a death involving the police, responsibility for searching bodies and the recording and security of any valuables should lie with the reporting officer.
- All valuables found must be recorded in a way which can easily be cross referenced to the entry in the body store register entry relating to the deceased. This entry should carry both the printed name and signature of the staff member entering it as well as the person corroborating it.
- Where the property has been left on the body (e.g. at family request) this should be checked by the APT and agreed by the funeral director collecting the body before a name and signature of both is obtained on the receipt or in the register.
- All property must be checked on collection by the person collecting, in the presence of the APT, and a name, signature and designation (e.g. police Officer inc shoulder number, relationship to deceased, family funeral director etc) obtained from the person removing it and of the APT handing the property over.

Storage

Valuables should be placed into a clear sealable bag (ideally of the security seal type) and labelled with the name, address and mortuary reference number. This should be stored in a secure location both in terms of the room and the storage cabinet.

Access to the cabinet key should be restricted to authorised individuals and there should be 2 people present for corroboration whenever the cabinet is accessed. The keys to the valuables cabinet should always be stored in a secure key cabinet or locked desk drawer away from the location of the cabinet and preferably in a different room.

All property should be recorded in a property book/register in duplicate with each patient's valuables being given a separate page and the top copy being inserted into the bag with the valuables. The security seal number should also be recorded on this receipt.

Recording of valuables should always be corroborated by 2 people and both should sign the property register page to confirm this has been done. The use of proper names for precious metals and stones should never be used and must always be substituted with colour descriptors such as yellow metal, white or silver coloured metal, red stones, green stones etc.

Collection / Removal

The mortuary should have a written policy in place for the return of valuables to the families of the deceased. This should only be either through the funeral director, police dealing with the death or directly to the family on production of suitable identification.

When returning valuables other than those remaining on the body, the identity of the person collecting must first be established and identification provided.

They should then satisfy themselves that the seal has not been broken before being given the opportunity to open the bag and confirm the contents against the list contained within the bag.

Once they are satisfied that everything is correct they should then print their name and sign, the copy of the receipt remaining in the valuables book as correct along with their address and their relationship to the deceased.

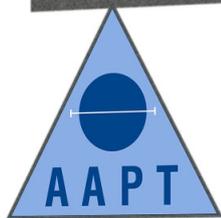
Where any irregularity exists between the record and the contents of the bag a senior staff member should be contacted to verify the contents and try to ascertain the reason for any deficiencies and if necessary police may be requested to attend.

Viewings

When preparing a body for viewing it is important to be aware of any valuables on the body and these should be checked prior to the departure of those viewing. Relatives should never be permitted to remove property from the body.

This should only be done by the APT and only when the right of the person viewing to take possession of the item has been established. Should valuables be returned to the family at this time then the same procedure for recording their removal must be followed with the name, address, signature, and relationship to the deceased being recorded as well as the name and signature of the APT releasing them.





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