

Managing The First Body of Deceased COVID-19 Patient in Taiwan, 2020

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Abstract

Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (Taiwan CDC) retrospectively tested the cases who were reported as severe complicated influenza from Jan 31 to Feb 15, 2020. A patient who died on the same day was diagnosed with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. In responding to the first deceased with confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Taiwan CDC investigated the case and supervised infection control. According to the Communicable Disease Control Act, Taiwan CDC classified COVID-19 as a Category 5 communicable disease on Jan 15, 2020. The deceased bodies should be double-bagged and cremated. Health care workers or mortuary staff handling the body should wear personal protective equipment (PPE), including high filtration masks, gloves, and gowns. The environment should be cleaned and disinfected immediately after transporting the bodies. The procedures to handle the dead body shows the confliction between religious or cultural practices and the prevention of infectious diseases. The local health bureau plays an important role in communication with the family. When handling the deceased bodies, there might be a risk to contract the disease. We recommend mortuary staff practicing for putting on and taking off PPE and staff should be familiar with the standard operating procedures.

Keywords: COVID-19, handling of deceased bodies

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