White Paper
Electronic Death Registry in Medicolegal Death Investigation

Overview

The electronic death registration system (EDRS) allows death certificates in the United States (U.S.) to be completed electronically, which benefits among others, medicolegal death investigators, hospitals, funeral directors, insurance companies, vital statistics, criminal justice, researchers, and family/estate planning. Medicolegal death investigation offices use electronic case management systems to store data collected for death certification. Connecting case management systems with EDRS allows for efficient, automated, and immediate transfer of information; reduces errors; and eliminates repeated data entry. Further benefits are gained by using the Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR®, pronounced “fire”) standard to make connections.

Advantages/Benefits

EDRS benefits all stakeholders involved in death certification:

• Enables users to complete the death registration process faster, with easier corrections, and with fewer errors.

• Provides web-based, secure data access at any time and across multiple platforms.

• Incorporates error-checking applications to improve data quality and identify deaths that were not initially reported.

• Enables electronic processing of death certificate amendments.

• Allows immediate transfer of information to vital records.

• Allows timely delivery of death certificate information to next of kin, insurance companies, the Social Security Administration, researchers, and other qualified entities.

• Promotes interoperability when utilizing FHIR® data transfer, including improved data quality; customizable systems; retrievable data; simpler data extraction; interoperability; and flexible and easier adoption of future infrastructure enhancements.

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Recommendations

Priority recommendations for medicolegal death investigation officials, health care organizations, and governmental agencies (local, state, federal) to complete U.S. death certifications consistently and efficiently are as follows:

• Incentivize all U.S. medicolegal death investigation offices to use EDRS.
• Ensure the EDRS is interoperable with case management systems to allow two-way data sharing and case creation for maximum efficiency.
• Establish or adopt a common programming language for commercially available systems (e.g., HL7’s FHIR® standards).
• Ensure EDRS help desks align with the round-the-clock nature of medicolegal death investigation by providing 24/7 phone and email support.
• Make EDRS instructions and other user materials readily available in common language to ensure understanding by certifiers with varying levels of technological skills and knowledge.
• Provide reliable and consistent dissemination of new information and updates to certifiers, using common and readily understood language.

Additional Resources


Suggested Citation