AbstractID: 6109 Title: Communicating Radiation Safety Procedures to Funeral Directors; Beyond Decay in Storage

Purpose: To discuss radiation safety issues that may arise in the event of death of patients who have received radiopharmaceutical therapy or a radioactive implant and to educate clinical medical physicists in specific procedures performed by pathology personnel, morgue personnel, funeral directors and crematory workers that present radiation safety risks to those workers. Also to provide guidance on lessons learned by the author in communicating appropriate radiation safety procedures to funeral professionals and working with state agencies that regulate funeral homes and crematories.

Method and Materials: The author researched pathology, embalming, and cremation procedures and facilities and spent considerable time on-site in such facilities to gain an understanding of the specific risks presented to personnel and safety precautions that are currently used (or not used).

Results: The author prepared instructions to be provided to personnel in the event of the death of radiopharmaceutical therapy or radioactive implant patient to comply with state and federal radiation control regulations and ensure personnel safety. The author also provided education to local funeral directors and spoke on this subject at a state funeral directors conference.

Conclusions: It is not a matter of "if" but rather "when" a clinical medical physicist at a facility performing radiopharmaceutical therapy or radioactive implant procedures will receive a call regarding radiation safety procedures for a deceased patient. It is preferable to be prepared with specific instructions and establish a relationship with your pathology laboratory, morgue, and local funeral professionals in advance than to flounder when the event occurs.