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Post-Mortem Case Records Pending and Complex Opinions

Practical 11 / Clinical or documentation case

Aim

Complete five fictional records in which timing, competing disease or pending tests affect the opinion.

Principle

Some findings are nonspecific or incidental. A provisional report can preserve accurate observations while deferring an opinion until evidence is reviewed.

Materials and Requirements

- Five teaching records in the observation table
- Pending-report checklist and case log

Procedure

1. For each case list established findings, received records and missing information.
2. Use one row per card and record what was observed, what was reported and which records are still missing. Mark where preservation or documentation affects assessment.
3. Identify the leading possibility and whether the available evidence supports a provisional causal opinion.
4. Compare the likely explanation with one competing possibility for each record. Show how the available data either support a limited interim opinion or leave both possibilities open.

Continue with step 5 on the next page.

Procedure Continued

Post-Mortem Case Records Pending and Complex Opinions

5. For the pregnancy-associated case identify relevant maternal history and clinical chronology. Record what would distinguish a pregnancy-related process from a coincidental condition using the supplied classification.
6. Write the specific review or ancillary result needed and the service responsible for it.
7. Assign each pending item to the simulated responsible service and write the expected decision it informs. Note when review was requested and whether further records have been received.
8. Close the classroom record with a dated status and verify it with the supervisor.
9. Read the dated status back to the supervisor and update the status when results arrive. Preserve the provisional wording and reason for any later revision.

Precautions

- Treat absence of a report as a limitation and use accurate dates.
- Keep fictional conclusions distinct from real medical certification.

Observations and Interpretation

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Observations and Record

Item	What to record	What it tells you
Case 11	Unexpected death with toxicology pending	Keep the exposure opinion open
Case 12	Decomposition limiting evaluation	Document preservation and examination limits
Case 13	Sudden collapse with organ findings of uncertain relevance	Request clinical, family and ancillary information
Case 14	Death during pregnancy with signs consistent with thromboembolism	Review obstetric and medical records for classification
Case 15	Severe chronic disease with a possible treatment complication	Review treatment timeline and differential

Worked Example

In Case 15 both chronic pathology and a possible treatment complication are recorded. The exact chronology and relevant results have yet to be provided.

Result and Interpretation

Record both findings and the reason for keeping the final opinion pending. Identify which information will be reviewed and by whom.

Viva Questions and Answers

Is a pending opinion an incomplete observation record?

Observed findings can be complete even while a causal conclusion awaits evidence.

What helps an examiner understand uncertainty?

A clear statement of the missing evidence and the competing explanations.

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