

DATE

Dear _____,

During a routine mortality chart review, it was noted that you did not provide an appropriate Preliminary Cause of Death on a death pronouncement/discharge summary.

Patient: *

MRN: *

Discharge date: *

Please recall: **The Cause of Death is the specific disease or injury which initiates a dependent and related sequence of events and is ultimately responsible for the death of that individual.** The Cause of Death is the “but for” without which the individual would not be dead.

Sometimes there may be confusion regarding the actual cause of death, especially if:

- a considerable time interval between the initial event and death has passed
- multiple disease processes are present

One of the most common errors seen in certifying a death is use of the term cardio-respiratory arrest as the Cause of Death. **Cardio-respiratory arrest is not a cause of death; it is a description of being dead and provides no information whatsoever as to what underlying injury or disease process was responsible for THE INDIVIDUAL'S DEATH.** Regardless of the cause, or manner, of death; the heart eventually stops beating and the lungs cease to breathe. Rather than list cardio-respiratory arrest as a cause of death, reflect on what was the underlying condition, or disease process, responsible for the “arrest.”

SJH Policy Reporting Deaths to the Medical Examiner is attached for your reference, which contains Cause of Death criteria. **Please addend the death pronouncement/discharge summary with an updated preliminary Cause of Death for this patient.**

If you have any questions, please contact Anna Talamo in Clinical Quality and/or Zoe Orecki in Risk Management.

Sincerely,



Clinical Quality and Risk Management Teams

Craig T. Montgomery, MD, MQC Peer Review Committee Chair

Cc: Philip A. Falcone, MD, MHL, FACS, Chief Clinical Officer