



## **New Brunswick Association of Respiratory Therapists**

**Title: Pronouncement of Death by Registered Respiratory Therapists**

**Number: NBART PS-002**

**Date Published: July 2, 2014**

### **Position Statement**

#### **MISSION AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The mission of the New Brunswick Association of Respiratory Therapists is to maintain and advance the standard of Respiratory Therapy in New Brunswick. We fulfill this mission by governing and regulating Respiratory Therapy services in New Brunswick, creating awareness of the practice of Respiratory Therapy, facilitating access to continuing education and promoting the role of Respiratory Therapy in providing safe, ethical care to the public.

#### **DEFINITION**

Pronouncement of death is defined as making a clinical determination / opinion that life has ceased. This decision is based on a physical assessment noting and observing the absence of spontaneous respiratory and circulatory function.

#### **POSITION**

The NBART believes that Registered Respiratory Therapists (RRTs) holding active licenses to practice in New Brunswick have the knowledge, skill and clinical judgment to assess the presence or absence of vital signs and pronounce death where an agency policy exists that authorizes RRTs to pronounce death. This will be based on the local practice models, policies and procedures and will differ amongst agencies. Furthermore, it is an expectation of the NBART that all of its members practice only in the areas of Respiratory Therapy in which they are educated and experienced.

#### **BACKGROUND**

It has been the practice in New Brunswick for physicians to pronounce death. This is not a legal requirement as there is not a reserved act or a delegated medical function governing the pronouncement of death in New Brunswick. This practice is now changing and in many hospitals and care facilities it is an allied healthcare professionals role to pronounce death in instances supported by an agency policy.

#### **FACTS**

After pronouncement of death, the RRT should inform the family, proceed with notification of the physician, and where appropriate, notification of the funeral home and/or the Coroner's Office.

Certification of death is a legislated function and as per the Vital Statistics Act Section 29(2) can only be performed by a medical practitioner or coroner. RRTs will not perform certification of death.

## **REFERENCES**

Province of New Brunswick (1979), Vital Statistics Act. Fredericton, New Brunswick: Queens Printer.

Province of New Brunswick (1973), Coroners Act. Fredericton, New Brunswick: Queens Printer.

NANB. (2014). Registered Nurses Pronouncing Death: Position Statement. Retrieved from [www.nanb.ca](http://www.nanb.ca)