Findings from the 2011-2012 NAACCR Death Clearance Evaluation:
Workgroup Issues Survey

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In June 2009 the Death Clearance Issues Workgroup, as part of the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee was charged by the NAACCR Board to assess the impact of the changes resulting from a soon-to-be-released “2009 Death Clearance Manual.” At that time, the Board requested that implementation of the minimum requirements be assessed due to the lack of clarity provided. The objective of this evaluation was to survey the registries to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact.

Methods/Approach: After receiving additional feedback from the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee, the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee (NAACCR ROC) charged the Death Clearance Issues Workgroup to develop an evaluation based on the feedback received from the NAACCR ROC. The evaluation was developed to survey the NAACCR member registries to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact.

RESULTS

- Twelve of the 19 respondents (66%) responded to the quantitative portion of the evaluation completely or partially.
- Seventeen of the 19 respondents (89%) reported a more than 5% increase in the number of death clearance cases handled by the registry.
- Seventeen of the 19 respondents (89%) reported a more than 5% increase in the number of non-death certificate only cases handled by the registry.
- Seventeen of the 19 respondents (89%) reported a more than 10% decrease in the number of death clearance cases due to a decrease in death clearance activities.
- Seventeen of the 19 respondents (89%) reported a more than 10% decrease in the number of non-death certificate only cases due to a decrease in death clearance activities.

CONCLUSIONS

- Many cancer registries have systems in place that can consistently manage and process death information and collect meaningful counts.
- Despite the increase in death clearance case load, it was clear that wide variation remains across registries in performing Death Clearance. Although clearer guidance is provided in the “2009 Death Clearance Manual,” registries are still not following the methods provided due to the following challenges:
  - Access and formats of information from the death certificate vary across registry catchment areas.
  - Certain registries cannot obtain death certificate information on any of their residents who die out of state, or when out of state residents die in state. Some registries also have a large proportion of their resident deaths occurring out-of-state.
  - Follow back rates from physicians and others necessary for clearing a death certificate vary widely. Due to low response rates and follow-up rates, some registries have difficulty keeping back log for certain deaths.

- Disagreement remains on the definitions of DCO cases, and whether or not the resources required for Death Clearance are justified.

SURVEY

The survey instrument was in 3 parts embedded in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The first worksheet or tab provided background information and questions about the 2009 Death Clearance Manual. The second tab asked about questions the process. Not all respondents answered all parts of the survey.

NAACCR Death Clearance Evaluation Registry Summary

January 12, 2011

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BACKGROUND

- In June 2009 the Death Clearance Issues Workgroup, as part of the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee was charged by the NAACCR Board to assess the impact of the changes resulting from a soon-to-be-released “July 2009 Death Clearance Manual.” At that time, the Board requested that implementation of the minimum requirements be assessed due to the lack of clarity provided. The objective of this evaluation was to survey the registries to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact.

METHODS

The Death Clearance Issues Workgroup provided an initial table of questions and concerns for consideration garnered from member registries and other NAACCR membership, both as well as through a Fall 2009 “QA Session: Death Clearance.” These included questions related to:
- the ability for all states and provinces to access mortality data,
- the accuracy of mortality data,
- using underlying and multiple cause of death,
- reporting National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR) requested minimum data elements.

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- In June 2009 the Death Clearance Evaluation sub-group formed, to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact.


- Respondents: The 19 NAACCR registry responses provided helpful insight into current challenges, progress, and potential future direction for the Death Clearance Process.

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- Methods/Approach: After receiving additional feedback from the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee, the NAACCR Registry Operations Committee (NAACCR ROC) charged the Death Clearance Issues Workgroup to develop an evaluation based on the feedback received from the NAACCR ROC. The evaluation was developed to survey the NAACCR member registries to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact.

- RESULTS

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- CONCLUSIONS

- Many cancer registries have systems in place that can consistently manage and process death information and collect meaningful counts.
- Despite the increase in death clearance case load, it was clear that wide variation remains across registries in performing Death Clearance. Although clearer guidance is provided in the “2009 Death Clearance Manual,” registries are still not following the methods provided due to the following challenges:
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- Purpose: Subsequently, the Death Clearance Evaluation sub-group formed, to (1) identify which of the changes in the Death Clearance Minimum Requirements were in most need of evaluation, and (2) determine the methods used to evaluate change impact. They evaluated the Death Clearance Issues Workgroup provided an initial table of questions and concerns for consideration garnered from member registries and other NAACCR membership, both as well as through a Fall 2009 “QA Session: Death Clearance.” The third tab asked about questions the process. Not all respondents responded to all parts of the survey.