



BRITISH ISLAMIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



Burials, Ghusls and Financial Support

Burials & Ghusls

What have we been doing?

- Practice in other countries on funerals and pre-burial handling
- Medical authorities on burials and funeral rites
- Opinions of scholars
- Where we came in



Practices Abroad

Q

Sections

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Workers from the Jewish Burial Society wearing masks stand around the body of Holocaust survivor Aryeh Even, 88, the first person in Israel to die from the coronavirus. (Reuters)

By **Steve Hendrix**

March 22, 2020 at 9:58 p.m. GMT

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JERUSALEM — Aryeh Even was just a teenager when he arrived alone in Israel from war-ravaged Hungary, a survivor of the Holocaust who built his life and family as the Jewish state was building itself. On Sunday, Israel mourned the 88-year-old as its first victim of the novel coronavirus, grieving with rituals adapted to the pandemic that killed him.

Even's body was carried to the cemetery by a burial party in biohazard gear, photographs of the private ceremony show. The funeral was limited to 20 mourners, each keeping at least six feet apart from the next. The nurse who cared for Even in his final days apologized on social media that his body could not be washed in the ritual way, as antiviral safety protocols now trump tradition.



Practices Abroad

← → ↺ thenewtribune.com/news/coronavirus/article241310636.html

Gov. Jay Inslee's ban on public gatherings to prevent the spread of the coronavirus includes funerals. The repercussions have been felt across cultures and inside funeral homes.

Memorials, viewings, sitting shiva, ritual cleansings, graveside services and military honors are forbidden under Inslee's orders.

It will even affect the memorial for Washington State Patrol trooper Justin Schaffer, who was killed Tuesday [during an attempt to stop a fleeing driver](#) near Chehalis.

"You can't have a funeral," said Coretta Harwood, owner of [Scott Funeral Home](#) in Tacoma. "We can't have a group of people in an enclosed space for any type of gathering."

Harwood had to cancel four funerals and memorials the weekend of March 14-15.

"We are allowing one family member to identify the person," said Russ Weeks, the owner of [Haven of Rest](#) funeral home, cemetery and crematory in Gig Harbor.

INCREMENTAL SHUTDOWN

Like other aspects of the coronavirus crisis, the ban on funerals arrived in increments.

On March 11, Inslee banned gatherings of 250 or more people in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties. That was followed on March 13 with a ban on gatherings of 50 or more people statewide.

Inslee followed that up March 16 [with a closure of bars and restaurants](#) (but permitting takeout) and limits on social gatherings.

On March 19, the state Department of Licensing clarified Inslee's proclamation to include all funerals. On March 20, Inslee made the funeral ban official.



Practices Abroad

← → ↺ irishpost.com/news/coronavirus-victims-buried-immediately-without-funerals-combat-spread-disease-181374 ☆ 6 M

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TRENDING: CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 THE SCRIPT TED COMMUNITY POLICING LEINSTER NURSING HOME CLUSTER HSE UPDATE AT RISK GROUPS

PEOPLE who die from coronavirus should be buried or cremated immediately without a funeral service, according to The Irish Association of Funeral Directors (IAFD).

The group has distributed a list of radical recommendations to funeral directors around the country in the event of Covid-19 related deaths.

In a bid to tackle the spread of the virus, they're advising that all victims be laid to rest straight away, and postpone a funeral service for a later date, according to the [Irish Independent](#).

It isn't just the dead they're worried about though, the IAFD are even advising against basic funeral protocol and admin for the family of the deceased, such as organising transport, and even advise that any information regarding services are given to them over the phone, rather than in person.

They're also uncomfortable with the idea of holding public-gatherings (funerals/wakes) while the outbreak still rages.

The IAFD advise that relatives of the deceased "should not be permitted to attend the funeral director's offices or funeral homes".

The deceased "should always be removed from the place of death in a body bag which is not reopened," and "removal vehicles should be hygienically cleaned after the removal of remains and all gloves and other disposable equipment should be disposed of safely," it said.

TRENDING

 **NEWS**
Ryanair operating at just 1% of capacity amid Covid-19 crisis - but airline still set to make €1bn profit

 **NEWS**
Aimee O'Rourke's daughter pays tribute NHS nurse and mother-of-three following her sad passing

 **NEWS**
Coronavirus cluster at Irish nursing home with nearly 100 residents and staff testing positive



Practices Abroad

← → ↻ jweekly.com/2020/03/25/death-during-a-pandemic-virtual-shiva-calls-and-funerals-without-mourners/ ☆ 7 ↓

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the Bay Area.

“We are only doing graveside services,” he said. That means no services at Sinai’s chapels, at cemetery chapels or at synagogues.

Those graveside services are proceeding with some unusual modifications. There can be no more than 10 mourners, who must all stand 6 feet apart, and there are no chairs. Jewish mourners traditionally take turns putting a shovel-full of earth on the coffin once it is lowered into the grave — but that shovel is just one more object to sanitize, so mourners now have to take soil and toss it onto the coffin with their bare hands.

“We have two priorities with any family: *kavod hameit*, dignity for the deceased, and kindness for the mourners and survivors,” Salkin said. “But our highest priority right now is making sure our staff and cemetery workers are healthy and as separated from the public as possible. Because if they get sick, we can’t serve the public.”

Bodies are handled differently before the funeral as well. *Taharah*, the traditional process of preparing a body for burial, ordinarily involves washing the body by hand. “We are placing the shroud on the body and we are doing all the liturgy, but no washing,” said Salkin.

He is concerned about the people who prepare the bodies as well, volunteer members of the *chevra kadisha*, the Jewish burial society. “The majority of people who do that work are over 65, so it’s prudent to limit having them in the buildings,” Salkin said.



Practices Abroad

ft.com/content/5e30a130-d62a-4c4c-a81f-b89f2448d9c8

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A pallbearer, right, helps a priest give the last blessing during a funeral service at the cemetery of Bolgare, Lombardy, on Monday
© Piero Cruciatti/AFP/Getty

In Bergamo, the victims are no longer dressed after death. Health regulations issued by local authorities, oblige funeral homes to seal the bodies in a “containment bag”, naked, with the hospital coat or with the clothes worn at the time of death, and immediately seal the coffin. Alternatively, a sheet soaked in disinfectant is used to wrap the bodies.

Vanda Piccioli, who runs a company offering funeral honours services in the nearby town of Alzano Lombardo, said she had been overwhelmed by requests and had had to turn several down. “We have never seen anything like that. There isn’t anything that isn’t sad. We are like sponges in this situation,” she said.

“Now we can only honour the dead through small gestures,” said Antonio Ricciardi, the president of the association of funeral service companies in Bergamo. “There are those who asked us to recover a ring, those who ask us to take small tokens of their loved ones’ lives and put them in the coffin.”



Practices Abroad

← → ↺ ⓘ aljazeera.com/indepth/features/coronavirus-changing-funeral-rites-mourning-grief-200327194602123.html ☆ 4 M ⋮

☰ UNITED KINGDOM How coronavirus is changing funeral rites, mourning and grief f t 🔍

In Iran, one of the world's worst-hit countries, Shia Muslim burial rituals have been abandoned, with families barred from cemeteries and bodies buried without undergoing ritual bathing.

The United Synagogue, a union of Orthodox British Jewish synagogues, announced on Wednesday that stone-setting ceremonies will be postponed.

All cemeteries have been shut and those sitting shiva, the seven-day period of mourning, have been advised that they cannot have visitors.

In Ireland, the Irish Association of Funeral Directors advised undertakers not to embalm the deceased, and to hold closed-coffin funerals instead of open-casket events.

Regimented and apathetic

Though technology is a solution for some, many are unable to access social media.



Hard-hit Iran frees more prisoners amid coronavirus outbreak



Medical Authorities

Public Health England¹

“Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease and can be transmitted when large groups of people congregate. However, with certain precautions funerals should continue to take place”

“There is a small but real risk of transmission from the body of a deceased person....Practices that involve close personal contact with the deceased should only be carried out using the correct personal protective equipment (PPE)”

“The risk from people who have died from a SARS-CoV2 infection arises as a result of aerosols generated in the post-mortem handling of the deceased. Management of this hazard will substantially reduce the residual risk as the virus will rapidly degrade when not sustained by living tissue”



Medical Authorities

Public Health England

“Individuals who have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), or who are part of a household where someone has symptoms, or who are vulnerable to severe infection should not participate in rituals or religious gatherings”

“Mourners should not take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body. Contact with the body should be restricted to those who are wearing PPE and have been trained in the appropriate use of PPE”

Risk of transmission of COVID-19 from an infected body

- 1) Potential droplet generation from artificial air movement during the initial care of the deceased
- 2) Post-mortem examination where the use of power tools take place, which is a risk for aerosol generation

“Due to the consolidation of respiratory secretions and rapid degradation of the virus when not sustained by live tissues, residual hazard from body fluid spillage will not present a risk”



Medical Authorities

Royal College of Pathologists²

Use of transmission-based precautions

	Non-autopsy procedures Including: • Admission of deceased • Booking-in of deceased • Preparation for viewing • Release of deceased	Autopsy procedures Including: • other invasive procedures
Disposable gloves	Yes	Yes
Disposable plastic apron	Yes	Yes
Disposable gown	No	Yes
Fluid-resistant (Type IIR) surgical mask (FRSM)	Yes	No
Filtering face piece (class 3) (FFP3) respirator	No	Yes
Disposable eye protection	Yes	Yes

General guidance

Body bag	Not required*
Viewing	Permitted**



Medical Authorities



Medical Authorities

World Health Organisation³

“To date there is no evidence of persons having become infected from exposure to the bodies of persons who died from COVID-19”

“Ensure that personnel who interact with the body (health care or mortuary staff, or the burial team) apply standard precautions, including hand hygiene before and after interaction with the body, and the environment; and use appropriate PPE according to the level of interaction with the body, including a gown and gloves”

“Health care workers or mortuary staff preparing the body (e.g. washing the body, tidying hair, trimming nails, or shaving) should wear appropriate PPE according to standard precautions (gloves, impermeable disposable gown [or disposable gown with impermeable apron], medical mask, eye protection);”



Medical Authorities

World Health Organisation

“Adults >60 years and immunosuppressed persons should not directly interact with the body”

“Human coronaviruses can remain infectious on surfaces for up to 9 days.⁷ COVID-19 virus has been detected after up to 72 hours in experimental conditions. Therefore, cleaning the environment is paramount”

“The mortuary must be kept clean and properly ventilated at all times”

“Environmental surfaces, where the body was prepared, should first be cleaned with soap and water, or a commercially prepared detergent solution”

“After cleaning, a disinfectant with a minimum concentration of 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% ethanol should be placed on a surface for at least 1 minute.⁹ Hospital-grade disinfectants may also be used as long as they have a label claim against emerging viruses and they remain on the surface according to manufacturer’s recommendations



Medical Authorities

World Health Organisation

“Personnel should use appropriate PPE, including respiratory and eye protection, when preparing and using the disinfecting solutions; and Items classified as clinical waste must be handled and disposed of properly according to legal requirements”

“Family and friends may view the body after it has been prepared for burial, in accordance with customs. They should not touch or kiss the body and should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after the viewing”

“Those tasked with placing the body in the grave, on the funeral pyre, etc., should wear gloves and wash hands with soap and water after removal of the gloves once the burial is complete”



Medical Authorities

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control⁴

“There is no evidence so far of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 through the handling of bodies of deceased persons”

“The potential risk of transmission related to the handling of bodies of deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is considered low and can be related to:

- Direct contact with human remains or bodily fluids where the virus is present
- Direct contact with contaminated fomites.”

“As viable SARS-CoV-2 may persist on surfaces for days, there is the possibility that the virus also persists on deceased bodies. Therefore, unnecessary contact with bodies should be minimised by those not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)”

“Those in direct contact with deceased cases of COVID-19 (both suspected or confirmed) should be protected from exposure to infected bodily fluids, contaminated objects, or other contaminated environmental surfaces through wearing of appropriate PPE. Minimum requirements include gloves and a long-sleeved water-resistant gown”



Medical Authorities

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

“During standard handling, the risk associated with transmission of droplets or aerosol from the airways of the deceased is considered low. Conversely, aerosol-generating procedures or procedures that can lead to splashes during post-mortem examinations carry a higher risk and require appropriate PPE (e.g. eye protection and facial filter piece (FFP) respirators, categories 2 or 3 (FFP2, FFP3)”

“Standard and non-invasive last offices body preparations, such as combing, cleaning and washing, may be performed using appropriate standard precautions and PPE preventing transmission through direct contact. Minimum requirements include gloves and long-sleeved water-resistant gown”

“Staff responsible for wrapping bodies before transport should wear appropriate PPE to minimise exposure to infected bodily fluids, contaminated objects and other contaminated environmental surfaces. The suggested set of PPE for the staff responsible for bagging/wrapping bodies is gloves and long-sleeved water-resistant gown.”



Scholars

3 main views

- 1) Deceased considered Shaheed so no ghusl required
- 2) Not safe to perform ghusl due to risk of infection, so bury without ghusl/ tayammum⁵
- 3) Ghusl should try to be done, provided safe and appropriate PPE available⁶



BIMA stance

Discussion with Public Health, NBC, Scholars and our own Infectious Disease consultants

We don't believe differing views are necessarily completely contradictory

We believe we have reached a happy middle and have summarized how to achieve a balance between normative obligation of ghusl , and the safety/ logistical issues specific to covid-19 and also what to do when this is not possible

Q&A⁷

Flowchart⁸



Q&A

British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) guidance on the performance of ghusl for deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

There is significant confusion around the issue of ghusl for deceased COVID patients. While it is understood that ghusl is the normative obligation for any deceased Muslim according to an overwhelming body of scholarly opinion, a range of theological views have come out both advocating for and against ghusl during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this information leaflet is to highlight the medical considerations that should help inform decision making for those responsible for administering religious burials for deceased Muslims.

Q1. Why is this a concern when Public Health England (PHE) states that washing and handling a deceased COVID-19 body is low risk?

A. With a lot of misinformation and public anxiety prevalent, and a range of practice across different countries¹⁻⁶, we consider it is necessary to elaborate on the practical considerations and specifics of ghusl practice to ensure it can safely be carried out during this pandemic. This guidance is drawn up in consultation with relevant specialists.

Q2. If the risk of contracting COVID-19 from a deceased body is low, then what is the problem?

A. While there is currently no evidence to suggest that the risk is significant, please bear in mind that low risk is not the same as no risk and so it is important to take adequate precautions when carrying out a ghusl.⁷

Q3. Where does the risk of contracting COVID-19 from a deceased body come from?

A. There is a small risk of contracting the infection from infected droplets or fomites (e.g. hair or clothes) on the body and possibly from bodily fluids from the mouth, eyes, and back passage.⁸ Spread via faecal transmission is something that also may be possible in a ghusl setting.⁹

Q4. What actions would increase the risk of transmission when performing a make a ghusl?

A. Any actions that lead to an aerosol spray or splash such as the use of an istinja/ shower spray or unnecessarily vigorous manipulation of the body.¹⁰ In such cases, the ghusl becomes high risk and we advise not to proceed.



Q&A

Q5. What facilities are needed to make a ghusl location safe?

A. A room with good ventilation¹¹ that can be washed down & disinfected thoroughly after each usage.

Q6. What personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed per person for handling a body?

A. PPE required are full sleeve plastic gown, gloves, fluid resistant surgical mask and visor.¹² If body isn't exposed to human contact after ghusl (e.g. in a body bag covered by a shroud) then PPE may not be necessary at burial site.

Q7. What training is needed to wear Personal Protective Equipment?

A. Without proper training in putting on and removing PPE, the performer of ghusl puts themselves at risk of infection.¹³ Ideally a PPE trainer should train volunteers in each masjid/ locality/ funeral setting.

Q8. There is a worldwide shortage of PPE. What if we are unable to source enough?

A. This is an ongoing issue, but may be overcome through some forward planning. Local Resilience Forums and local authorities should be able to advise on the availability of PPE in each locality. Depending on availability as the pandemic progresses there needs to be consideration given to where PPE distribution should be prioritised across our communities – for example for use by frontline medical staff dealing with potentially infected patients.¹⁴

Q9. Who are high risk individuals that should not be involved in ghusl or handling body?

A. Anyone over the age of 70 or with a significant condition¹⁵ as listed on the nhs.uk website.¹⁶ Therefore, local masajid and funeral directors should begin training volunteers on how to perform ghusl, and how to correctly don and doff PPE.

Q10. If mitigation efforts are not possible, what is the MEDICAL advice?

A. The medical advice is that if despite all possible efforts, you are not able to mitigate the risks – then alternative methods should be sought according to your local scholars. Any questions, please email covid@britishima.org. This guidance is an aide. All communities are advised to contact local specialists for context specific advice.

References for the points made in the guidance document:

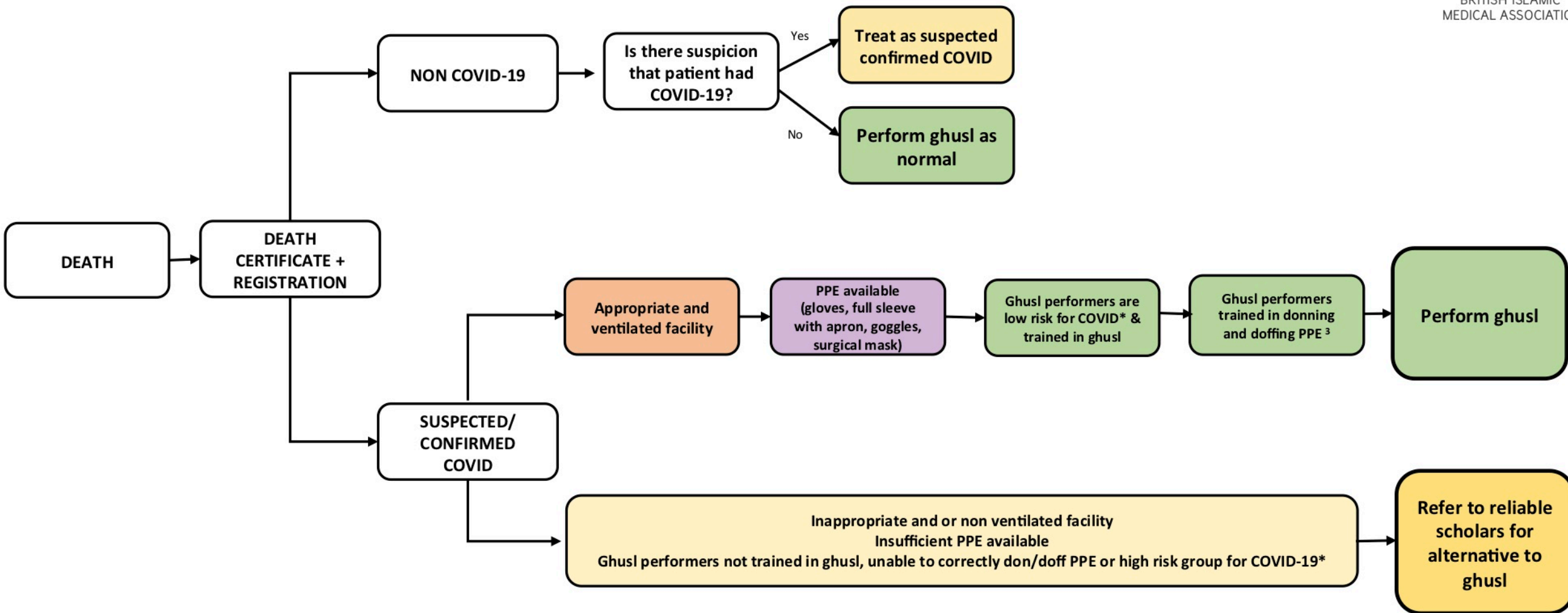
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| 1. bit.ly/2Urc012 | 5. bit.ly/3bwYuOU | 9. bit.ly/2Jm6cj7 | 13. bit.ly/2UsNvR7 |
| 2. wapo.st/39ot5gg | 6. bit.ly/2OWGkyn | 10. bit.ly/2Uvvhyu | 14. bit.ly/2WPGw6p |
| 3. bit.ly/3bzHCHj | 7. bit.ly/2JmJuHu | 11. bit.ly/2wLI78c | 15. bit.ly/2WUIt1e |
| 4. bit.ly/3bB4Nkz | 8. bit.ly/2Ustqu3 | 12. bit.ly/39uYopR | 16. bit.ly/2UIJCp9 |



BRITISH ISLAMIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



PATHWAY TO FOLLOW FOR PREPARING DECEASED DURING COVID PANDEMIC



Important information: Ghusl is the normative obligation. All efforts should be considered to perform this obligation where possible, safe and practical. However, there are alternatives if this isn't possible. This is guidance and we advise to please consult your local scholars & local experts. Please also note that once body has had ghusl and is back in body bag & shrouded then gloves only should suffice as no direct contact with body.

Appropriate facility: Room needs to be ventilated & cleaned with hot water/ soap each time. No spraying water to be used.^{1, 2}

PPE information: Although not required by PHE guidance, we recommend beard cover/ full sleeve apron if available for additional safety.

High risk for COVID 19 : serious underlying health condition, pregnant or >70 years old. Visit bit.ly/2wLvtQZ for full list.⁴

References & contact:
1. bit.ly/3apowvi 2. bit.ly/2UCixJ2
3. bit.ly/2UyUiY9 4. bit.ly/2wLvtQZ

Any other options?



Hospital to do ghusl?

- Occurring already in parts of the country
- Accepted by Hanafi madhab
- perhaps worth exploring?

Funeral Financial Support



<https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments>

- Financial support from the government if need help paying for funerals

Funeral Expenses Payment can help to pay for some of the costs of the following:

- Burial fees for a particular plot
 - Cremation fees, including the cost of the doctor's certificate
 - Travel to arrange or go to the funeral
 - Cost of moving the body within the UK, if it's being moved more than 50 miles
 - Death certificates or other documents
-
- You can also get up to £700 for any other funeral expenses, such as funeral director's fees, flowers or the coffin.-
 - The payment will not usually cover all of the costs of the funeral.
 - How much you get depends on your circumstances. This includes any other money that's available to cover the costs, for example from an insurance policy or the deceased person's estate.

Funeral Financial Support



Eligibility

- You get certain benefits or tax credits
- You meet the rules on your relationship with the deceased
- You're arranging a funeral in the UK, the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland

If you don't meet criteria?

- National Zakat Foundation have advised to contact them for assistance⁹

Nightingale Mosques

Tuesday 6th April 8pm – 10pm

<http://bit.ly/BoltonCMS>

22-bed unit in Bolton in a mosque
End-of-life care
Staffed by local GPs and pharmacists

Join webinar to see how it can replicated in other parts of the country



Thank you

Contact

- covid@britishima.org
- www.britishima.org
- Twitter/FB: @britishima



References

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