

Embalming a COVID-19 case

Embalming a COVID-19 case is basically the same as any other-if you use universal precautions. However, the coronavirus is different than other influenza infectious diseases in that it has a characteristic and ability to spread more effectively than its counterparts. Because of this, the embalmer needs to treat the remains with a high degree of caution.

Based upon research from other embalmers recently, we have taken some highlights from what we have learned.

- 1.) Prepare your prep-room for everything you need prior to making the removal and preparation of the decedent. Have your instruments, etc. ready to go so you don't have to unnecessarily touch more things than you need to.
- 2.) Use proper PPE to minimize exposure and transmission to you-others.
- 3.) Use a minimum of a 5% solution.
- 4.) Pay special consideration to treating the upper areas of the respiratory tract. Mouth, nostrils, eyes, and esophagus/lungs with dis-spray or other type of disinfectant.
- 5.) Aspiration. Not all agree on this element of the process of preparation.
 - A. If no purge or extended abdomen is evident, some have said not to aspirate at all to minimize releasing of aerobic material in the air. Overload of the virus into the environment can occur.
 - B. Others disagree and proceed using the technique of injecting cavity fluid using a trocar into the thoracic cavity first, allowing the fluid the chance to kill the virus in these areas. Allow 6-12 hours. Then, aspirate contents and re-injecting cavity into the region one last time.
- 6.) Clean prep-room upon completion more so than your normal cases.
- 7.) Clothing you have worn should go through the laundry ASAP. Even the decedent's clothing the family gives you for casketing should not be handled carelessly.