

Department of Health

Enquiries to: Dr [forensic pathologist]
Forensic Pathology
Forensic and Scientific
Services
Telephone: (07) 3274 9200
Facsimile: (07) 3274 9201
Our Ref: SS[number]

2 July 2015

Title First Name Last Name
Address
Suburb State Postcode

Dear [name of family member to whom the autopsy findings have been explained by phone]

Re: [deceased's full name, DOB, age]

I am writing in relation to the death of your [son/daughter/NOK], [deceased's name], and to offer some health advice for other members of the family. I understand you may have spoken with a coronial counsellor about this previously.

[Channelopathies]

The pathologist's autopsy did not show a clear explanation for death. It is possible that [deceased's name] may have died from an abnormal heart rhythm, often called a 'channelopathy'. One common type is long QT syndrome (LQTS). Unfortunately, it may be impossible to confirm this condition using standard tests. Some cases of abnormal heart rhythm run in families. It is strongly recommended that families seek medical advice and discuss the possibility of genetic testing.

[Cardiomyopathy]

The pathologist's autopsy showed that [deceased's name] died from a heart muscle disease called 'cardiomyopathy'. Some cases of cardiomyopathy run in families. It is strongly recommended that families seek medical advice and discuss the possibility of genetic testing.

[Atherosclerosis]

The pathologist's autopsy showed that the blood vessels which supply the heart muscle were severely narrowed. This narrowing is called 'coronary atherosclerosis'.

High blood pressure, and lifestyle factors such as smoking and a fatty diet can cause coronary atherosclerosis and heart attacks. However, genetic factors that run in families may also play an important part, particularly in deaths of younger people such as [deceased's name].

This means that [deceased's name]'s first degree 'blood' relatives should consider seeking medical advice. First degree blood relatives are parents, brothers, sisters, and children. This is very important in those with symptoms such as chest pain. However, it is possible to suffer from a heart condition without having any symptoms.

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I suggest thinking seriously about the following steps:

1. Copies of this letter should be given to all adult first degree blood relatives.
2. All first degree blood relatives (or their parents or guardian if they are children) should think about seeking advice from a GP, who may suggest referral to a cardiologist.
3. A copy of this letter and the autopsy report should be given to the GP and cardiologist.

I have taken the liberty of copying this letter to the co-ordinator of a state-wide service for families with inherited heart disease. You can ask the co-ordinator for advice at any time (details below). The co-ordinator may get in touch to see if you need any more information or assistance.

Details of medical specialists are listed below for the information of GPs and other cardiologists. It would be extremely helpful if any relevant genetic results could be copied to the pathologist, who is willing to be contacted by the GP or cardiologist if they need further information about the autopsy (subject to the Coroner's approval). The pathologist's contact details are listed below.

I realise that this letter may be distressing. It certainly is not my intention to cause you or your family any further anxiety. However, I think it is important that family members receive this health information and have the opportunity to discuss it with a GP or specialist.

Family members are welcome to contact a coronial counsellor with any questions. The counsellor's contact details are listed below.

Yours sincerely

Dr Charles Naylor
Chief Forensic Pathologist [or name and details of his delegate]

Copies to:	[Name & location of the local Coroner investigating the death]	3247 4606
	[Name of case pathologist] Forensic Pathologist	3274 9200
	[Name of Counsellor] Coronial Counsellor	1800 449 171
	Ms Lauren Hunt Cardiac Genetic Counsellor	3646 1686

Details of medical specialists with expertise in inherited heart disease:

	Dr John Atherton	Dr Julie McGaughran	Dr Rob Justo	Dr Jim Morwood
<i>Specialty:</i>	Cardiologist	Geneticist	Paediatric Cardiologists	
<i>Service:</i>	Cardiology	Genetic Health Qld	Qld Paediatric Cardiology Service	
<i>Hospital:</i>	RBWH	RBWH	Mater	
<i>Tel:</i>	3646 7200 or 3646 7632	3646 1686	3163 1667	
<i>Expertise:</i>	Inherited heart disease	Genetics of inherited heart disease	Premature atherosclerosis	Channelopathies and Cardiomyopathy

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