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Chief, Mortality Statistics Branch  
National Center for Health Statistics  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
3311 Toledo Road  
Hyattsville, MD 20782-2003  
Room 5401

August 19, 2021

Dear Dr. Anderson:

I am leading a citizen-driven national effort to improve the accuracy of death certificates. Our organization, New England Patient Voices (NEPV) is working in collaboration with The Patient Safety Action Network (PSAN) in this endeavor. We would like to invite you to be a guest speaker at one of our upcoming (virtual) PSAN meetings to discuss death certificates in relation to medical harm events.

NEPV's mission is advocating for high quality, compassionate, patient-centered healthcare by raising awareness and educating consumers and patients. PSAN is a national group of accomplished patient safety advocates who work individually and collectively on a variety of healthcare policy and delivery issues, with the goal of reducing patient harm and improving patient safety. Many of us have either personally suffered from or have family members who have died as a result of medical injuries.

For many years, we have participated in state, regional and federal level committees or workgroups (CDC, HHS) and articulated our concerns about the significant volume of inaccurate death certificates resulting from the omission of healthcare associated infections and medical injuries as causes or contributing factors to death. However, nothing to date has been done about this.

Recently the issue of accurately documenting deaths from COVID19 has been in the media due to the CDC's guidance to medical professionals about this. We agree with your perspective in recent media reports that contributing factors to death are just as important as causes of death because they tell us what led to the death. We also embrace your well-stated sentiment that 'If you know why people die, very often then you can develop programs to prevent people from dying from those causes'.

Our group meets monthly and we would like to have you address one of our meetings and discuss ways in which we might be able to help improve our system for completing, certifying and collecting data from death certificates. Our group is diverse in the committees, boards, and policy work we contribute to. We know that when we've worked together with patient safety and public health leaders, our contributions have had a significant and positive impact.

I am happy to discuss this further by telephone if you think you might be able to accommodate us.

Respectfully,

Lori Nerbonne  
PSAN Committee on Death Certificate Reform  
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