

# Cigarettes and Death Certificates

All of us are well aware of the role cigarette smoking plays in the causation of pulmonary emphysema and squamous cell carcinoma of the lungs. Most of us also realize the aggravating effects of cigarette smoking upon coronary ischemic heart disease. For years we have neglected to mention tobacco on certificates of death except under the most unusual of circumstances.

Physicians are expected to render a clinical judgment as to the causative factors of death when a certificate is completed. There is no reason why we should continue to omit the most significant causative factor in the production of pulmonary emphysema and squamous cell carcinoma of the lungs when we certify. Certainly the use of tobacco is the major underlying causative factor in the above two diseases.

The collection of accurate final statistics has always been a function of the Division of Health. It would be of great service if every physician in the State of Florida were to receive a directive from the Division of Health with a request that

cigarette smoking or tobacco use be specifically mentioned on the death certificate when, in the clinical judgment of the certifier, this was a factor when death was caused by pulmonary emphysema or squamous cell carcinoma of the lung or other smoking related diseases. An alternative would be a box to be checked off on the certificate which would designate whether or not the patient had been a heavy user of cigarettes. This would be simpler for the physician as it would require no additional judgment decision on his part in regard to the relationship of the death and cigarettes. Statistical analysis of the data so collected would, in the long run, accomplish the same desired purpose.

In the meantime, there is no reason why we physicians, on our own, could not begin to certify as has our colleague, Dr. Charles F. Tate.

JOSEPH H. DAVIS, M.D.

► Dr. Davis, Dade County Medical Examiner, Miami 33136.

**CERTIFICATE OF DEATH**  
FLORIDA

Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services  
DIVISION OF HEALTH  
STATE OF FLORIDA

STATE FILE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
REGISTRAR'S NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DECEASED NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SEX: Male DATE OF BIRTH: January 9, 1973  
RACE: White AGE: 66 DATE OF DEATH: May 5, 1906 COUNTY OF DEATH: Dade  
CITY/TOWN OF RESIDENCE AT DEATH: Miami MARRIED/NEVER MARRIED: Married  
5035 N.E. 2nd Avenue  
U.S.A. BARBER SHOP  
5035 N.E. 2nd Avenue

FATHER: \_\_\_\_\_ MOTHER: \_\_\_\_\_  
UNOBTAINABLE UNOBTAINABLE

DEATH WAS CAUSED BY: Acute respiratory insufficiency  
BRONCHOGENIC CARCINOMA, SQUAMOUS CELL LEFT  
CIGARETTE SMOKING

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFYING PHYSICIAN: Charles Tate, Jr., M.D. JMH 1/9/73  
1700 N.W. 10th Avenue Miami Dade Florida 33136

BURIAL: Dade Memorial Park Rural R Dade Florida  
DATE: Jan. 17, 1973 BURIAL PLACE: Richmond F. Home 485 N.E. 54th Street Miami Fla.  
FUNERAL HOME: Alexander Kolski Elizabeth Everson Jan. 11, 1973