

Cherokee Nation Code Annotated

Title 21: Crimes and Punishments

Part IV. Crimes Against Decency and Morality

Chapter 47: Violating Sepulture and the Remains of the Dead

§ 1154. Autopsy--Definition--When allowed--Retention of tissue and specimens

Cite as: 21 CNCA § 1154

A. Autopsy means a post-mortem dissection of a dead human body in order to determine the cause, seat or nature of disease or injury and includes, but is not limited to, the retention of tissues for evidentiary, identification, diagnostic, scientific and therapeutic purposes.

B. An autopsy may be performed on the dead body of a human being in the following cases:

1. In cases authorized by positive enactment of the Council;
2. Whenever the death occurs under circumstances in which the medical examiner is authorized as provided in Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes to conduct such autopsy; or
3. Whenever consent is given to a licensed physician to conduct an autopsy on the body of a deceased person by whichever one of the following assumes custody of the body for purposes of burial: Father, mother, husband, wife, child, guardian, next of kin, or in the absence of any of the foregoing, a friend, or a person charged by law with the responsibility for burial. If two (2) or more such persons assume custody of the body, the consent of one of them shall be deemed sufficient.

C. 1. Any physician or hospital authorized to perform an autopsy pursuant to this section, whether by statutory authority or by consent from a person entitled to assume custody of the body for burial, shall be and is authorized to retain such tissue and specimens as the examining physician deems proper. Such tissue and specimens may be retained for examination, dissection or study in furtherance of determining the cause of death, or for evidentiary, diagnostic, or scientific purposes. Except with regard to medical examiners and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, this provision shall not apply if a person entitled to assume custody of the body for burial notifies the physician or hospital performing the autopsy prior to said autopsy of any objection to the retention of tissue and specimens obtained from the autopsy.

2. No physician or hospital authorized to perform an autopsy pursuant to this section shall be subject to criminal or civil liability for the retention, examination, dissection, or study of tissue and specimens obtained from said autopsy under existing laws regarding the prevention of mutilation of dead bodies.

Historical Data

LA 10-90, eff. November 13, 1990. Amended LA 07-21, eff. February 22, 2021.