

# Medical certification of cause of death: Essential Resource Kit for countries

Reliable and timely statistics on mortality and causes of deaths are essential for the development of national health and population policies, and underpin the ability of countries to respond to emerging health threats and epidemics. Cause of death (COD) statistics are generated from the information provided on a decedent's medical certificate of cause of death, a process known as **certification**. Following certification, the cause (or causes) listed on a medical certificate are **coded** and then **consolidated** into national vital statistics, used by governments to determine health priorities and evaluate the impact of health programs. The reliability, and hence, policy utility of national vital statistics is therefore **directly dependent** on the accuracy and timeliness of a country's death certification and coding practices.

This Resource Kit has been prepared with the objective of providing countries with an essential set of tools and materials to improve the quality of *medical certification of cause of death* (MCCOD) by achieving three broad outcomes:

1. Ensure death certification practices meet international standards
2. Improve death certification in hospitals
3. Improve death certificate coding.

Underpinning these outcomes is a set of resources containing *empirical evidence and country examples*.

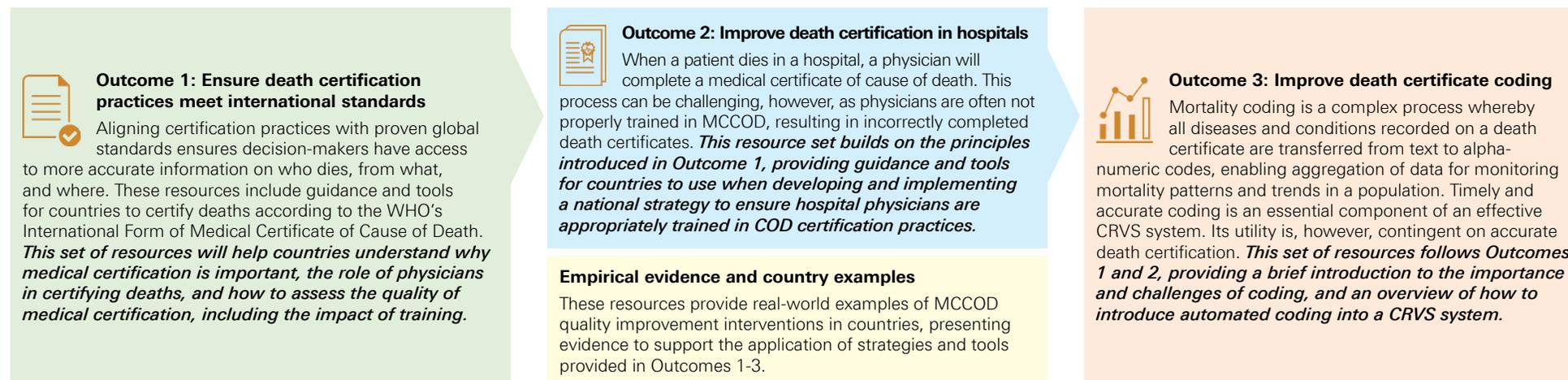
## How to use this Resource Kit:

The MCCOD Resource Kit contains all of the key resources countries need to improve death certification and coding. It provides the key tools and guidance materials to help countries: a) assess the most common certification errors being made; b) train physicians in correct COD certification; and c) evaluate the impact of these training sessions on physician's certification skills. It is recommended that countries review the resources in the order provided, starting with Outcome 1.

Resources listed under 'Empirical evidence and country examples' provide real-world examples and evidence to support the application of the methods, tools and strategies referenced in this Kit.

Two categories of resources are provided for each outcome: (1) *Key resources*, which are vital to understanding the basic principles required to achieve each outcome, and (2) *Recommended resources*, which provide further detail, and build on the key resources.

This Resource Kit provides countries with a list of essential resources to begin planning and implementing MCCOD improvements. Additional resources can be found on the CRVS Knowledge Gateway, at: <https://crvsgateway.info/resources>. Information on in-country training to support improvements to MCCOD and death certificate coding can be found at: <https://crvsgateway.info/training>.



**Expected outcome: Improved availability of reliable mortality data for sound public health policy-making and planning**

# Medical certification of cause of death: Resource list

## KEY RESOURCES

## SUPPORTING RESOURCES

### Outcome 1: Ensure death certification practices meet international standards



**Medical certification of cause of death** [701KB]  
Describes the importance of training and education for physicians on MCCOD



**Handbook for doctors on cause of death certification** [1.02MB]  
Generic guidelines for physicians on how to certify COD



**Medical certification of cause of death: Quick reference guide** [288KB]  
How to correctly complete the WHO medical certificate of COD



**Assessing the quality of death certificates: Guidance for the rapid tool** [1.75MB]  
Detailed guidance on how to use the rapid assessment tool to better understand current cause of death certification practices



**Assessment of quality of medical certification practices: a quick reference guide** [1.50MB]  
Guidelines on assessing common errors recorded on Frame A of the WHO medical certificate of COD



**Assessing the quality of death certificates: Rapid assessment tool** [383KB]  
Simple tool for checking common errors on death certificates; for use in the assessment of death certification practices



**Death Certificate Assessment Tool (Excel version): User guide** [2.06MB]  
Guidance for using the Microsoft Excel version of the Death Certificate Assessment Tool



**Death Certificate Assessment Tool (Excel version)** [26.4MB]  
Microsoft Excel template to assess the quality of death certificates

### Outcome 2: Improve death certification in hospitals



**Strategies for improving the quality of cause of death data in hospitals** [716KB]  
Describes eight key action areas to improve the quality of COD data in hospitals



**Action guide on improving the quality of cause of death data in hospitals** [449KB]  
Concise overview of the eight key action areas to improve the quality of COD data in hospitals



**Training and education on medical certification of cause of death: effective strategies and approaches** [962KB]  
Outlines a best-practice plan for MCCOD education and training for physicians at three different career stages



**Action guide on training and education on medical certification of cause of death** [1.75MB]  
Concise overview of the plan for MCCOD education and training for physicians



**Medical certification of cause of death: Facilitator's guide** [1.44MB]  
Detailed course outline to guide and assist the training of physicians and medical students in correct COD certification

### Outcome 3: Improve death certificate coding



**Mortality coding** [830KB]  
Describes the importance and benefits of coding COD data for subsequent use in public health policy and planning



**Action guide on implementing automated coding (Iris)** [424KB]  
Describes the seven key steps that countries should follow to implement automated coding of death certificates

### Empirical evidence and country examples



**Improving medical certification of cause of death: effective strategies and approaches based on experiences from the Data for Health Initiative** [524KB]  
Describes three training strategies and their impact on the quality of death certification in five countries



**Introduction of Iris automated mortality coding system in the Philippines** [704KB]  
Describes the activities involved in the introduction of Iris in the Philippines, from initial system capacity assessments to the evaluation of Iris outputs following implementation

The program partners on this initiative include: The University of Melbourne, Australia; CDC Foundation, USA; Vital Strategies, USA; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA; World Health Organization, Switzerland.

For more information contact: [CRVS-info@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:CRVS-info@unimelb.edu.au)  
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Civil Registration and Vital Statistics partners:



Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

