IMA Advisory: In every unexplained death give an option to conduct a virtual autopsy

**Press Release**

*New Delhi, Jan 05, 2017:* IMA is for establishing virtual autopsies at the clinical level for non-medicolegal cases. Virtual autopsies can be facilitated by currently available techniques like whole body CT, whole body MRI, post mortem angiography and molecular autopsy.

**Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal - National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI), and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement** said, “Virtopsy or virtual autopsy is an alternative to traditional autopsy, conducted with scanning and imaging technology. The methods used are whole body or limited CT and or MRI. One can add to it CT guided post mortem biopsies for histopathological and genetic correlations. CT is well suited to show foreign objects, bone and air or gas distribution throughout the body, whereas MRI sequences are strong in detailing organ and soft tissue findings. A comprehensive analysis of both surface and deep tissue findings may require fusion of CT, MRI and 3D surface data.”

Virtual autopsy using the whole body CT scan or MRI can done in no time and will leave no scar which may offer a reliable alternative to conventional autopsy in certain cases.

“Virtual autopsy can be the answers in finding the cause of death and also evaluate the cause in unexplained deaths. The same is necessary to prevent further such episodes in the community. It is also the answer for most medicolegal disputes. In every death IMA members should give an option for virtual biopsy with or without mini FNAC/ tissue biopsy. And informed refusal must be noted”, added Dr. Aggarwal.

Considering the increasing number of unexplained deaths in the medicolegal and non-medicolegal settings, virtual autopsies may help accelerate the investigation process. Due guidelines for ethical practice of Virtopsy should also be defined to prevent any misuse.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 29 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 53,000 doctors as its members through more than 1650 active local branches spread across the country.

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