

1981 S.C. Op. Atty. Gen. 113 (S.C.A.G.), 1981 S.C. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 81-87, 1981 WL 96613

Office of the Attorney General

State of South Carolina

Opinion No. 81-87

October 27, 1981

*1 Honorable Willson W. Williams
Coroner
Georgetown County
Post Office Box 1534
Georgetown, South Carolina 29440

Dear Mr. Williams:

You have inquired as to whether an autopsy performed upon a dead body in Georgetown County at your authorization is available for public inspection.

In my opinion, this autopsy should not be disclosed to the public for the reason that it will invade the privacy of those persons having a qualified property right in the dead body and also because it would be detrimental to the public interest that this material be publicly displayed.

The details of an autopsy report are of such an intimate, personal nature concerning vivid medical allusions to parts of the human body, their description and indications of prior history. A report of this nature constitutes a medical record which is not available for public consumption.

I advise, therefore, that, in my opinion, the report is not subject to public disclosure. It is my understanding that you have released the determinations made by the medical authorities concerning the cause of death, and in this respect, I think that you are correct. Similarly, I think that you are correct in submitting to those having a qualified property interest in the dead body, i.e., the next of kin, is also correct.

With best wishes,
Very truly yours,

Daniel R. McLeod
Attorney General

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