

11. Pathology

Hypoxic encephalopathy

An issue that has not been addressed nationally in pathology circles is the need to perform histology on the brains of patients who have been clinically declared to be 'brain dead'. 8% (3/37) of the autopsied patients examined were so categorised in this study, and none had confirmatory histology. The gross appearances of the brain in early hypoxic encephalopathy are non-specific and then the morphological diagnosis can only be confirmed microscopically. In life, the diagnosis of brain death follows strict clinical and imaging criteria, and for medico-legal purposes it is not a requirement to have autopsy confirmation.