

Diagnostic and management algorithm

Identification of coma

Clinical evidence of cause of coma with likely mechanism leading to death by neurological criteria (DNC)
(possibly supported by history, neuroimaging, cerebrospinal fluid, etc.)

Yes

Exclusion of

- Hypothermia
- Intoxication
- Sedative drugs
- Neuromuscular blocking agents
- Severe electrolyte, acid-base or endocrine abnormality

Absent brain stem reflexes
Absent motor responses
Apnoea with clear rise in PaCO₂ levels of >2.7 kPa (>20 mm Hg) above a baseline of at least 5.3 kPa (40 mm Hg) to >8.0 kPa (60 mm Hg)
These procedures should be clearly explained to relatives and carers

Yes

Clinical diagnosis of death by neurological criteria