

**Figure 10.2.15.**  
**Human death**

**Database:** World Problems and Issues

**Link type:** aggravated by problems

**Network nodes: 447**

**UIA database:** <http://db.uia.org/scripts/sweb.dll/uiaf?DD=PR&CL=2&DR=A0072>



Human death is the cessation of life, physical and mental, characterized by total and permanent cessation of the functions or vital actions of the human organism. In reality, two kinds of death are to be considered. First, there is somatic death, which implies the inability of the body to continue to function as an integrated entity. Without the use of artificial measures, somatic death is inevitably followed by cellular death, the cells of different organs and tissues of the body dying at different rates in accordance with their different oxygen requirements, those of the brain being the most delicate. Increasingly, the conception of 'brain death' as constituting the essential criterion has gained ground. The activity of the brain may be measured electronically by the electroencephalograph, and when the brain has ceased to function this instrument records a tracing variously described as 'flat', 'linear', or 'isoelectric'. This conception of 'brain death' as signifying the end of life in any meaningful sense has been so widely accepted that it has been incorporated into the legislation of some countries. The only controversial point is the time that should elapse before the flat tracing of the electroencephalograph should be considered irreversible.