Introduction to Verbal Autopsy

Webinar upon the release of 2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument

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Verbal autopsy is a structured interview with the caregivers or next of kin of the deceased that can be used to determine the most likely cause of death.

Where no physician sees the dead

Image conceded with permission by Greg Kabadi
Purpose of this WHO verbal autopsy instrument

Routine use at the population level usable with software algorithms

Determining causes of death in settings without physician certification in routine CRVS.

Common base extendable for research purposes

Do not replace physician-certified cause of death.
The Verbal Autopsy (VA) System: tools and process overview

1. Interview with family member/relative
   - 2022 WHO Verbal Autopsy Instrument
     - Includes COVID-19 questions

2. Cause of Death assignment procedures
   - Algorithms and/or physician panel

3. Population cause of death information
   - WHO target cause list
VA Cause of death assignment methods

1. PCVA
   ‘Physician Coded Verbal Autopsy’

2. CCVA
   ‘Computer Coded Verbal Autopsy’
   • SmartVA-n
   • InterVA-n
   • InsilicoVA

Aggregate to CSMFs

‘Cause-Specific Mortality Fractions’

Causes of death tabulation list
Data analysis programmes

WHO does not recommend any particular software algorithms

Physician assessment remains the gold standard
Application of WHO VA Tools in CRVS systems

**VA System – population sample**
- VA CoD list: 66 CoD mapped to ICD-10
- WHO VA questionnaire: Personal & vital registration information of the deceased

**Digital Data Collection**
- Data collection software
- ODK version of WHO VA questionnaire for CRVS
- VA data quality assurance system

**Data analysis and Cause of Death assignment**

**Data storage – national setting**
- Data stored in centralized location (e.g. district level)
- Central database at national level

**Statistical office; Ministry of health; Ministry of justice; Ministry of Interior**

**Death notification system**

**Data management & analysis capacity using**
- InterVA; SmartVA; InsilicoVA; OpenVA

**Physician review**
2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument

WHO simplified VA instrument for routine use, within CRVS systems

Short list of causes of death

- Feasible to certify from VA
- Public health importance

WHO standard VA questionnaire

- Relevance for diagnosing the target causes of death
- Feasible to recognise, recollect and report in VA interviews
- Short interviews
- Suitable for software
Release of the 2022 WHO VA instrument

The revision of the 2016 WHO Verbal Autopsy (VA) instrument is the result of the comprehensive inputs of the full WHO Verbal Autopsy Reference Group (VARG) with the support of WHO regional and country offices, the tireless efforts of the Small Revision Task Group, and the contribution of many countries with data and expertise.

The development of the 2022 WHO VA instrument would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of numerous countries, organizations, institutions and individuals.
Map of use of WHO Verbal Autopsy in research, surveys, demographic surveillance and in CRVS systems, and contribution to the 2022 revision

WHO interactive map on the use of the WHO verbal autopsy instrument

Guinea Bissau
1st user of 2022 VA Instrument

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WHO Verbal Autopsy Standards


... or use the QR code

...or email us on verbalautopsy@who.int
Agenda of the webinar

01. Release of 2022 WHO VA instrument

02. Give an overview of the development of The WHO verbal autopsy instrument

03. The methods used to improve the current WHO VA standards. A catalogue of the changes and improvements in the instruments

04. Verbal autopsy implementation and application in the field. Information on how to access the available tools and guidance needed for VA implementation

05. A quick demo of electronic tools for 2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument

06. Questions and Answers