
MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY

The Medical Examiner's Office staff are involved in a wide variety of activities commensurate with the mission of the office including responding to and investigating the scene of death, performing postmortem examinations, certifying the cause and manner of death, and providing information and assistance to families. Investigators, who are familiar with the emotional trauma of an unexpected death, communicate directly with the family. The Medical Examiner pathologists review their findings with the families in order to clarify the many questions that accompany a sudden loss of life. The office also provides referrals to grief support services.

In all cases investigated by the office, Medical Examiner staff establishes the decedent's identity, and locates and notifies the next-of-kin of the death. In addition, staff secures property that belongs to the decedent and releases it according to legal requirements. In most cases identification and property issues are resolved expeditiously. In certain cases, identification requires additional effort in locating dental, medical, or police records. Some individuals may have died leaving no next-of-kin or next-of-kin far removed. Medical Examiner staff ensures that all leads have been exhausted in pursuit of next-of-kin; this can be a very time consuming but ultimately rewarding effort.

The Medical Examiner's autopsy staff and forensic pathologists perform a postmortem examination on each decedent that may include external and internal photographs, the preservation of various body fluids and tissues for microscopic and toxicological analysis, and in many cases, skeletal and dental radiography. The above examinations are essential items in those cases where the pathologist provides court testimony. The Medical Examiner's office also provides forensic anthropology services, another important activity necessary to resolve skeletal cases and difficult identification issues.

Medical Examiner pathologists and investigators provide testimony in court and at depositions. Staff participates in meetings with police, medical professionals, and attorneys. The Chief Medical Examiner also provides expert medical consultation and testimony in cases involving nonfatal domestic violence assaults.

The Medical Examiner's Office provides autopsy reports and related data from individual investigations to law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, and many other agencies including Labor and Industries, Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The Medical Examiner's Office reports drug related deaths to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), a national public health surveillance system that monitors drug trends.

Medical Examiner investigations require frequent contact between the Medical Examiner's Office and various media personnel. Staff is skilled in responding to the media inquiries that occur daily. The Medical Examiner pathologists and other staff participate in a variety of medical conferences, and provide information on a regular basis to law enforcement and medical personnel on various aspects regarding the role and function of the Medical Examiner's Office.

The data collected and presented in this and other Medical Examiner annual reports also provide baseline information for further analysis. Medical Examiner staff analyzes data to study relevant death investigation topics that have applications in such fields as law enforcement, medicine, law, social sciences, and injury prevention. Examples include infant mortality, teenage suicide, child abuse, law enforcement restraint, investigation of traffic collisions, and investigation of therapeutic complication deaths. In addition, the Medical Examiner's Office participates in the education of medical students, pathology residents, emergency medical service providers, college interns, and law enforcement personnel.

In 2005, staff participated as speakers at universities, conferences, and training seminars for law enforcement, medical, legal, and social service personnel in the following presentations and lectures:

Richard C. Harruff, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Examiner

Associations, Committees and Boards:

- Advisory Board, University of Washington Certificate Program in Forensics
- Community Advisory Board, University of Washington School of Nursing, Advanced Practice Forensic Nurse Specialist Program
- King County Child Death Review Committee
- King County Elder Abuse Council
- Washington State Child Death Review Advisory Committee
- King County Jail Health Services Quality Assurance Committee
- Member, American Academy of Forensic Sciences
- Member, National Association of Medical Examiners
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
- Member, Washington State and American Medical Associations

Preceptorships:

- Clinical Professor, Department of Pathology, University of Washington School of Medicine
- Medical Students and Residents in Pathology from University of Washington School of Medicine and Resident in Pathology from University of Hawaii School of Medicine
- Graduate Forensic Nursing Students, University of Washington School of Nursing
- Paramedic Students, Harborview Medical Center

Publications:

- *Tramadol (Ultram) concentrations in death investigation and impaired driving cases and their significance.* Clarkson JE, Lacy JM, Fligner CL, Thiersch N, Howard J, Harruff RC, Logan BK. *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 2004 Sep; 49(5):1101-5.
- *Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional firearm injuries.* Grossman DC, Mueller BA, Riedy C, Dowd MD, Villaveces A, Prodzinski J, Nakagawara J, Howard J, Thiersch N, Harruff R. *JAMA* 2005 Feb; 293(6):707-14.
- *Epidemiology of MDMA and associated club drugs in the Seattle area.* Banta-Green C, Goldbaum G, Kingston S, Golden M, Harruff R, Logan BK. *Substance Use and Misuse* 2005;40(9-10):1295-315.
- *Investigation of the sudden death of infants: a multicenter analysis.* Landi K, Gutierrez C, Sampson B, Harruff R, Rubio I, Balbela B, Greco MA. *Pediatric and Developmental Pathology* 2005 Nov-Dec;8(6):630-8.

Local and Regional Educational Presentations:

- The Death Scene and Autopsy
King County Prosecuting Attorneys Training
Seattle, WA January 22
- Medicolegal Death Investigations Course
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
Lacey, WA March 10
- Strangulation Injuries
Domestic Violence Training for Prosecutors
Bastyr University,
Seattle, WA March 24 and 25
- Traffic Fatality Investigation and Investigation of Infant Deaths
Medicolegal Investigation of Death Course
University of Washington
Seattle, WA April 11
- Characteristics of Physical Injuries in Assaults
Forensic Nursing 2005 – Violence, a Critical Issue for Nursing Practice
Conference Sponsored by University of Washington School of Nursing
Seattle, WA April 14
- Patterned Injuries and Strangulation
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) Core Training
University of Washington
Seattle, WA April 26
- Firearm Injuries
Seattle Police Department
Seattle, WA May 2
- Medical Examiner's Office and the Immigrant Community
Community Housecalls Advisory Board
Harborview Medical Center
Seattle, WA June 8

- Medical Examiner and the Operating Room Staff
Harborview Medical Center
Seattle, WA July 6
- Strangulation Injuries
King County Department of Corrections
Seattle, WA July 20
- Patterned Injuries and Strangulation
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) Core Training
University of Washington
Seattle, WA October 4
- Fatality Management - Lessons from Katrina
Washington State Association of Local Public Officials
SeaTac, WA November 30
- Forensic Pathology and the Medical Examiner
Overlake School,
Redmond, WA December 7

Brian Mazrim, MD, Associate Medical Examiner

Associations, Committees and Boards:

- Member, American Academy of Forensic Scientists
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners

Local and Regional Educational Presentations:

- Problems in Forensic Pathology Educational Conference
King County Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle, WA Weekly 2005

J. Matthew Lacy, MD, Associate Medical Examiner

Associations, Committees and Boards:

- Associate Member, American Academy of Forensic Scientists
- Fellow, College of American Pathologists
- Member, National Association of Medical Examiners
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners

Preceptorships:

- Clinical Instructor, Department of Pathology, University of Washington School of Medicine

Publications:

- *Aberrant neuronal-glia differentiation in Taylor-type focal cortical dysplasia (type IIA/B).* Englund C, Folkerth RD, Born D, Lacy JM, Hevner RF. *Acta Neuropathol (Berl)*. 2005;109(5): 519-533
- *Postinfectious vasculopathy with evolution to moyamoya syndrome.* Czartoski T, Hallam D, Lacy JM, Chun MR, Becker K. *J. Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry*. 2005; 76: 256-259

Local and Regional Educational Presentations:

- Medical Examiner Testimony
Franklin High School Mock Trial Team
Seattle, WA January 11
- Tryptase in Death Investigation
Forensic Pathology Conference
King County Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle, WA April 20
- Opiate Deaths in King County
King County Board of Health
Seattle, WA October 21

Katherine Taylor, PhD, Forensic Anthropologist***Associations, Committees and Boards:***

- Fellow, American Academy of Forensic Sciences
- Diplomate, American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
- Member, Washington State Task Force on Missing and Unidentified Persons
- Member, Seattle University Advisory Board, Criminal Justice Program

Trainings and Educational Activities:

- Participant, Integrated Emergency management Course/Recovery and Mitigation: University of Washington. National Emergency Training Center (FEMA), Emmetsburg, MD August 8-11.
- Participant, National Conference on Missing and Unidentified Persons. Denver, CO November 7-9.

Local and Regional Educational Presentations:

- A Career In Forensic Anthropology
University of Washington Career Day Panel
Seattle, WA January 24
- Mock Expert Witness Testimony
Seattle University School of Law
Seattle, WA March 7
- Speaker for the Careers in Forensic Panel
Mercer Island High School Career Day
Mercer Island, WA March 21
- Careers for Women in Science: Forensic Anthropology
Expanding Your Horizons Conference at Bellevue Community College
Bellevue, WA March 30
- Determination of Human vs. Nonhuman Skeletal Material
Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office
Tacoma, WA March 30
- Forensic Anthropology
Seattle University Forensic Science Class
Seattle, WA April 12
- Instructor for Buried Body and Surface Recovery School
Lane County Sheriff's Office
Eugene, OR April 18-20
- Determination of Human vs. Nonhuman skeletal material
Washington State Search and Rescue Conference
Chelan County, WA May 21
- Guest on Cop Talk Radio
Bellevue, WA September 28
- Outdoor Crime Scenes and Evidence Collection
Northwest Association of Forensic Science
SeaTac, WA November 15
- Outdoor Skeletal Remains Scenes
Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office
Tacoma, WA December 14

Greg Hewett, MDiv, Program Manager IV***Associations, Committees and Boards:***

- Member, Seattle University Advisory Committee, Criminal Justice Program
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners

Presentations:

- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Al Noriega
Seattle University Criminal Justice Program
Seattle, WA April 13
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Al Noriega
Seattle University Criminal Justice Program
Seattle, WA April 14

Al Noriega, Lead Forensic Medical Investigator***Associations, Committees and Boards:***

- Diplomate, American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
- Member, Seattle University Advisory Committee, Criminal Justice Program

Presentations:

- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle University
Seattle, WA January 19
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Nathan Geerdes
Seattle University
Seattle, WA January 26
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Greg Hewett
Seattle University
Seattle, WA April 13
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Greg Hewett
Seattle University
Seattle, WA April 14
- Medicolegal Death Investigation
Virginia Mason Medical Center, Clinical Laboratory
Seattle, WA August 9
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
King County Sheriff Chaplains
King County Fire Chaplains
Seattle, WA August 30

Nathan Geerdes, BA, Medicolegal Death Investigator***Associations, Committees and Boards:***

- Diplomate, American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners

Presentations:

- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Co-presenter with Al Noriega
Seattle University
Seattle, WA January 26
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle University
Seattle, WA March 1
- Role and Responsibility of the Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle University
Seattle, WA March 18

Robinette Struckel, Forensic Autopsy Technician***Associations, Committees and Boards:***

- Trainee Affiliate, American Academy of Forensic Scientists
- Member, Northwest Association of Forensic Scientists
- Member, Disease Surge Capacity Response Team
- Member, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners

Presentations:

- Collection, Processing, and Release of Evidence from KCMEO
Co-presented with Jaime Navarro, Forensic Autopsy Technician
King County Advisory Committee meeting
Seattle Police Department Training Office
Seattle, WA November 15

Table 12-1 Weekly Variation of Deaths Investigated by the King County Medical Examiner's Office / 2005

	TOTAL
Number of weeks studied	52
Mean number of cases assumed	37
Maximum in any one week	60
Minimum in any one week	24

Table 12-2 Weekly Variation of Autopsies Performed by the King County Medical Examiner's Office / 2005

	TOTAL
Number of weeks studied	52
Mean number of autopsies	23
Maximum in any one week	37
Minimum in any one week	17

Organization of the King County Medical Examiner's Office 2005

