

# Forensic pathology: An Overview

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## Editorial

Pathology that focuses on finding the cause of death by analysing a corpse is known as forensic pathology. In some jurisdictions, a medical examiner or forensic pathologist conducts a post mortem examination as part of the investigation of criminal and civil matters. Coroners and medical examiners are regularly called upon to confirm a body's identity. Autopsies and postmortem exams are performed by forensic pathologists to ascertain the cause of death. The autopsy report expresses a viewpoint on the following [1]: A bullet wound to the head, exsanguination caused by a stab wound, manual or ligature strangulation, myocardial infarction due to coronary artery disease, and so on are examples of pathological processes, injuries, or diseases that directly result in or initiate a series of events that lead to a person's death (also known as the mechanism of death) [2]. Other difficulties posed by the death, such as the collecting of trace evidence or determining the identity of the deceased, can be handled during the autopsy. At autopsy, at the scene of a crime, and occasionally in a clinical environment, such as rape investigations or deaths in custody, the forensic pathologist analyses and documents wounds and injuries. To determine the presence or absence of natural disease and other microscopic findings such as asbestos bodies in the lungs or gunpowder particles around a gunshot wound, forensic pathologists collect and study tissue specimens under the microscope (histology) [3]. To determine the chemical cause of accidental overdoses or deliberate poisonings, they collect and analyse toxicological specimens of bodily tissues and fluids. Forensic pathologists collaborate closely with the medico-legal authorities in charge of investigating sudden and unexpected deaths: the coroner (England and Wales), the procurator fiscal (Scotland), or the coroner or medical examiner (other countries) (United States). They testify in civil and criminal proceedings as expert witnesses in courts of law. A forensic pathologist is frequently aided by an autopsy/mortuary technician during an autopsy (sometimes called a diener in the US). Forensic physicians, often known as "forensic medical examiners" or "police surgeons" (until recently in the United Kingdom), are medical doctors educated in the assessment and treatment of surviving victims of assault, particularly sexual assault, as well as those in police custody. In the United Kingdom, many forensic physicians work part-time in clinical forensic

medicine while also practising family medicine or another medical speciality [4]. Membership in the Royal College of Pathologists is not required for appointment as a coroner's medical expert in the United Kingdom. Doctors who are not forensic pathologists or pathologists are permitted to perform medicolegal autopsies in the United Kingdom, according to the wording of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, which simply states that a "registered medical practitioner" is defined as anyone on the General Medical Council register [5].

In some countries, a non-physician, elected official engaging in medicolegal death investigation is referred to as a "Medical Examiner." In others, the medical examiner is required to be a physician, pathologist, or forensic pathologist by law. Similarly, both physicians and non-physicians are referred to as "coroners." Coroners were not always doctors in the past (most often serving primarily as the town mortician). In some jurisdictions, however, the term "coroner" is only used by doctors. In German-speaking Europe, forensic pathology lectures were offered on a regular basis in Freiburg in the mid-eighteenth century and Vienna in 1804. Scientists such as Auguste Ambroise Tardieu, Johann Ludwig Casper, and Carl Liman worked hard to turn forensic pathology into an empirical discipline. The American Board of Pathology was the first to acknowledge forensic pathology in the United States in 1959. It was formally recognised in Canada in 2003, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is currently working to establish a formal training programme (a fellowship).

## Reference

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